

THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY

*THEIR AGRARIAN CONDITION, SOCIAL
LIFE AND RELIGION*

BY

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"THE RUSSIAN STORM-CLOUD," "RUSSIA UNDER THE TSARS"
AND "UNDERGROUND RUSSIA"



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NOTE

IN view of the recent social and industrial upheaval in Russia, and the widespread interest that is being taken by the British and American public in the progress of the Russian working classes towards liberty, the publishers have thought it desirable to issue this popular edition of the late Mr. Stepniak's chief work, by arrangement with its original publishers, Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Limited. Owing to the lamented death of the author, it has been impossible to bring the work quite down to date, but the Russia of to-day remains the same as that of ten years ago.

Mr. Percy Addleshaw's epitaph on the author, which appeared in *The Academy* shortly after his death on 23rd December, 1895, may be worth permanent preservation here.

One man there was ignored a tyrant's will,
One resolute voice that thundered o'er the fight;
The valiant heart, though dead, is lying still,
Lo! the sun rises while we wail 'Good-night!'

G. R. & S., L.

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THE RUSSIAN AGRARIAN QUESTION

CHAPTER I.

IN all European countries the agrarian question is of great moment, but in none does it possess the same interest and importance as in Russia. Here the agricultural class constitutes eighty-two per cent. of the entire population, equal for European Russia, exclusive of Finland and Poland, to about sixty-three million souls. Ireland alone, with seventy-three per cent. of her population engaged in husbandry, approaches, at some distance, this figure. Russia is, and must undoubtedly for many years remain, a peasant State in the fullest acceptance of the term. With us, therefore, the agrarian question is the national question, and agrarian concerns are national concerns, all others being dependent on and subservient to them. The tillers of the soil—our *moujiks*—must of necessity become the chief figures in our social and political life. On the *moujik* rests the financial, military, and political power of the State, as well as its interior cohesion

and prosperity. The inclinations, ideals, and aspirations of the *moujiks* will also play the principal part in the remoulding of Russia's future. For all interested in politics—statesmen and administrators, writers and scholars—the *moujik* must be the prime object of study, observation, and investigation, as well as of practical manipulation.

For the same reasons the Russian *moujik* has always attracted the attention of observant travellers who have desired to make known to English-speaking readers the agrarian conditions of this strange country, of which so much is said and so little known. There are few among educated foreigners who have not heard of the self-governing, semi-republican *mir* and the somewhat communistic Russian system of land tenure, with its periodical equalizations and divisions. Much less attention has been given by the European public to the modern phases of Russian agrarian life, albeit this side of the question is perhaps the most interesting and instructive.

The Emancipation Act of February 19th, 1861, enfranchising and settling the economical conditions of one-half of our rural population, the former serfs of the nobility, followed in 1866 by

a second Act, settling the condition of the other half, the former State peasants, were by far the most extensive experiments in the way of agrarian legislation the world has yet seen. The peculiarities of our traditional system of land tenure, sanctioned to a great extent by the Emancipation Act, imparted to this experiment an additional interest.

That these experiments have not proved a success no competent person can now deny. Emancipation has utterly failed to realize the ardent expectations of its advocates and promoters. The great benefit of the measure was purely moral. It has failed to improve the material condition of the former serfs, who on the whole are worse off than they were before the Emancipation. The bulk of our peasantry is in a condition not far removed from actual starvation,—a fact which can neither be denied nor concealed even by the official Press.

The frightful and continually increasing misery of the toiling millions of our country is the most terrible count in the indictment against the Russian Government, and the paramount cause and justification of the rebellion against it. It would be a gross injustice to affirm that the

Government has directly ruined or purposely injured the peasantry. Why should it act with such foolish and wanton wickedness? We can well understand that a despotic Government, caring only for its own selfish interests, should object to the commonalty being educated. But it is to the Government's own material advantage to have well-to-do tax-payers rather than the beggarly ones it has now. I admit willingly that the central Government quite sincerely intended to benefit the peasants, not only morally, but economically, by the agrarian arrangement of 1861. Still more so by that of 1866, which is better than its predecessor in every respect; the Government in the latter case not having been hampered by a desire to conform to the wishes of the nobility.

Leaving out of the question the immaterial point of intentions, I am ready to go the length of acknowledging that it would be incorrect to maintain that to the Government's unintentional blunders should be ascribed the ruin which has overtaken the peasants. The new agrarian arrangement is very unsatisfactory, and the system of taxation is simply monstrous. I shall presently show how far both these elements contributed

towards reducing the peasants to their present condition. But still it was not the Government's direct doing. There is one consideration which clearly proves this. Since the Emancipation the yield from the direct taxes imposed on the peasants has increased. But until 1879 their burdens had increased twelve per cent. only. Since that time they have remained stationary, and of late years there is even a slight decrease in the direct taxes—very slight, yet still a decrease. As to the impoverishment of the masses, measured by the reduced consumption of food and the increase in the rate of mortality, it is frightful and intense, and shows no sign of abatement whatever. This is proof to demonstration that there must be at work another corrosive influence more inexorable and fatal and less under control even than the actions of the uncontrollable bureaucracy.

This influence lies in the new economical system, quite opposed to the traditions and ideals of the Russian peasantry, and which has been forced on them by the Act of Emancipation. In these few pages I purpose to present a brief, yet as far as possible complete, account of the results of the Russian agrarian experiment, derived from the numerous and painstaking reports on the

subject in which modern Russian literature is so rich.

But what constitutes the basis of the traditional economic conceptions of our agricultural classes? The communal system of land tenure, the reader may suggest, is its most original and striking feature. On this, however, I shall not dwell. First, because it was affected but slightly by the Emancipation Act of 1861, which gave each village commune the option either of breaking up their land into private allotments and distributing it among independent families, or keeping it as common property. Secondly, because the communal land tenure, though accepted by seventy-three per cent. of our peasantry, is only exceptional among the Ruthenians, who form the remainder of our rural population. The evil inflicted by the Emancipation Act is of a much wider reach and greater importance; it arises not from the way in which occupying owners divide their properties among themselves, but from the fact that they are fast being divorced from the soil which they till.

The Russian popular conceptions of land tenure, though they may seem somewhat heterodox to a Western lawyer or modern economist, are ex-

actly the same as those which in past times prevailed among all European nations before they happened to fall victims to somebody's conquest. Russian peasants hold that land, being an article of universal need, made by nobody, ought not to become property in the usual sense of the word. It naturally belongs to, or, more exactly, it should remain in the undisturbed possession of, those by whom, for the time being, it is cultivated. If the husbandman discontinues the cultivation of his holding he has no more right over it than the fisher over the sea where he has fished, or the shepherd over the meadow where he has once pastured his flock.

This does not, however, imply any question as to the right of the worker over the product of his labour. In Russia a peasant who has improved and brought under tillage new land always obtains from the *mir* a right of undisturbed possession for a number of years, varying in its *maximum*, in divers provinces, from twelve to forty years, but strictly conforming in each case to the amount of labour which had been bestowed on it by the peasant and his family. During this period the occupier possesses the full right of alienating his holding by gift or sale.

But when the husbandman is supposed to have been fully remunerated for his work, all personal prescriptive right ceases.

These notions cannot be called exclusively Russian. They are deeply rooted throughout the Slavonic world, save among the few tribes who have been long subjected to Western influences and overdrilled by the feudal régime. The Turkish domination proved in this respect much more tolerant. The customs which prevail among the Balkan slavs are almost identical with those commonly accepted in Russia. Here, according to Bohishitch, the people do not recognize a right of property in virgin land. When cultivated, it becomes the rightful property of its occupier, and remains his so long as he continues to improve it with the work of his own hands. A tenant who has cultivated for ten years without interruption another man's land becomes *ipso facto* its legitimate proprietor and ceases to pay rent, on the ground that he has bought up, by his ten years' payments, the claims which the former landlord might have acquired. In Bulgaria, according to the same authority, the principle is pushed still further. Here simple wage labourers acquire the right of ownership.

over the land on which they have been employed without interruption for the ten years' period, so that farmers, in order to avoid being expropriated, change their labourers at least once before the expiration of every ten years. . . .

In Russia, until its close alliance with Western countries in Peter the Great's time, the popular notions as to land tenure were common to all classes, the Government included. "There is no country," says Prince Wassiltchikoff, in concluding his careful study of the history of our agrarian legislation, "in which the idea of property in land was so vague and unsteady as it was until very recently with us, not only in the minds of the peasants, but also of the representatives and heads of the State. The right of use, of possession, of the occupation of land has, on the contrary, been very clearly and firmly understood and determined from time immemorial. The very word 'property,' as applied to land, hardly existed in ancient Russia. No equivalent to this neologism is to be found in old archives, charters, or patents. On the other hand, we meet at every step with rights acquired by use and occupation. The land is recognized as being the natural possession of the husbandman, the

fisher, or the hunter, of him who 'sits upon it.' " In the living language of peasants of modern times, there is no term which expresses the idea of property over the land in the usual sense of the word. The expression "our land" in the mouth of a peasant includes indiscriminately the whole land he occupies for the time being, the land which is his private property (under recent legislation), the land held in common by the village (which is, therefore, only in the temporary possession of each household), and also the land rented by the village from neighbouring landlords. Here we see once more the fact of working the land identified with rights of ownership.

When serfdom was introduced, and one half of the arable land, with the twenty-three millions of human beings who lived thereon, gradually became the property of the nobility, the newly enslaved peasants found less difficulty in realizing the fact of their slavery than in understanding the law which allotted the land to those by whom it was not tilled. "We are yours," they said to their masters, "but the land is ours." "*My vashi, zemlia nasha*,"—this stereotyped, hundred times quoted phrase, vividly sums up the Russian peasant's conception of serfdom.

When, after so many years of expectation, disappointment, and delusive hopes, the longed-for day of emancipation came for the down-trodden serfs, the idea of the impending enfranchisement assumed in the rural mind only one and the same shape through all the empire—that when once restored to freedom they would not be despoiled of that which they had possessed as slaves—their land. The universal expectation, as proved by the universal disappointment, was that the freed peasants would have all the land which they had previously tilled. As to the nobles, their former masters, the Czar would keep them, they thought, henceforward “on salary, as he kept his generals.” This was the ingenious and naïve expression of a very clear and practical idea—that of the State buying out the landlords by means of a vast financial operation. This was precisely the measure advocated by Tchernyshevsky and the *Souremennik* party as the best and most convenient solution of the Russian agrarian problem.

The Government, as might well be expected, was loth to adopt a course which seemed so hazardous and new. Fortunately for itself, it did not follow the opposite course, which would

have been the signal for a tremendous popular rising—the enfranchisement of the peasants without any land at all, as suggested by the reactionary anti-abolitionist party. The freed peasants were endowed with small parcels of land, carved out of the estates of their masters, who retained, however, the greater part of their properties. The idea of the Government was to keep up the system of great landlords, while creating around them a class of resident owners.

This may have seemed a fair compromise, but in reality it was not so. In the preamble of the Emancipation Act the intention of the Government was clearly defined. “To provide the peasants,” it ran, “with means to satisfy their needs, and enable them to meet their obligations to the State (payment of taxes), the peasants will receive in permanent possession allotments of arable land and other appendages, as shall be determined by the Act.” Hence, a small proprietor, according to the Government’s own definition, is a husbandman having a piece of land on which he can live, however poorly, and pay his taxes—a definition which economists will readily accept. A peasant in this position is, indeed, a regular “small proprietor,” or resident owner. If, how-

ever, a man possess a patch of land of a few square yards, on which he can grow a bushel of potatoes, he is a "proprietor" all the same, but only from a juridical point of view. In the eyes of an economist he is a pure proletarian, amenable to the economical laws regulating the conditions of this and not the other class.

Now to which of these two categories do the enfranchised Russian peasants belong? Certainly not to that of small proprietors, in the economical sense. Neither are they pure proletarians. They partake of both characters, in what proportion we shall see further on. Let it here suffice to say that the land was so parsimoniously apportioned that the enfranchised peasants were utterly unable to provide themselves with the first necessities of life. With few exceptions, the bulk of our peasantry are compelled to look to wage labour, mostly agricultural, on their former masters' estates and elsewhere, as an essential, and often the chief, source of their livelihood.

Thus, the Act of Emancipation did not, as its promoters intended, create side by side small and large landowners who could live and labour and thrive independently, without obstructing and damaging each other's work. The peasants were

not independent of the landlords. The landlords were not independent of the peasants. There existed in Russia at the time of the Emancipation no agrarian proletariat whatever. The landlords could nowhere find regular wage labourers by whom they might replace their enfranchised serfs. The cultivation of the landlords' vast estates had either to be entirely dropped or their serfs compelled to till them for hire.

This was the new principle on which Russian rural economy had thenceforward to be based. It was decidedly opposed to our national and inveterate traditions, as I have just shown. It was borrowed from Western countries. I do not say that it was not better than serfdom. It certainly was better. Neither do I affirm that those who introduced it had the slightest suspicion of the havoc which in one generation it was destined to produce. I am simply stating a sad but undeniable fact. In social and political life, as well as in the domain of art and fiction, imitations seem always to bear the same original sin: while reproducing with great fidelity the drawbacks, imitators ignore and forget the merits of their exemplars. Thus the Capitalist order came to us without any of the free elements of

polity which were its outcome in the countries of its birth. All the advantages in the impending struggle were therefore on one side. The masses were left with no means of defence, and the Government threw the enormous weight of its material and political power into the scale of wealth and against labour. The victory of the protected few over the helpless many was thenceforth assured. It was also complete and frightfully rapid.

In the following chapters I propose to describe the ways and means whereby this victory has been gained and the consequences which it has entailed. As yet Russia is an enormous, albeit a comparatively simple, economical organism. Through the puzzling and disorderly complication of private economical operations we shall discover a striking unity of cause. It is a huge economical mechanism, combined upon one leading principle and having one consistent end. I shall begin by describing its central organs, those which impart movement and life to the whole,—the banking and credit system, circulation of money, and the rest.

CHAPTER II.

FOR obtaining full control of the resources of the country, Russian capitalists made use of two seemingly innocent means—the railways and credit. The construction of the railways was undertaken in the first instance by the Government itself. Very soon, however, the business was transferred to private companies, which the State supplied with capital, since at that time no private enterprise could raise such enormous sums as were involved in the construction of the railways. Up to January 1883, 13,500 miles of permanent way had been laid in Russia proper, and the total amount of shares issued by the various companies was 2,210,000,000 roubles (about £22,000,000 sterling). Of this sum the Government supplied directly fifty-four per cent.—i.e., more than half—the money being raised by several loans, chiefly foreign, the interest of which (four, four and a half, and five per cent.) is, of course, debited to the railway companies in

their accounts with the State. In order to enable the companies to raise the remaining forty-six per cent. the Government guaranteed a *minimum* revenue, and undertook to make good out of the public funds any deficit that might arise. Nor is this all; in cases of emergency the Government still continues to make supplementary grants to these companies, which have already been so generously subsidized from the national exchequer.

With the public finances always in an unsatisfactory condition, this lavishness must needs be a grievous burden on the budget. In 1869 the national debt amounted to 1,907·5 millions of roubles, of which only 10·6 per cent. fell to the share of the railways. In January 1883 the national debt had increased to 3,267 millions of roubles, of which fully 28·3 per cent. had been contracted for the construction of railways. Thus the railway debt increased in this period absolutely fivefold, and at three times the rate of the national debt itself.

These outlays, it is true, figure in the budget as debts owing by the railway companies to the State—temporary loans which in due time will be repaid to the exchequer. But this is a mere fiction. The indebtedness of the railways to the State is continually increasing in each category

under which the advances are made—viz., direct subsidies, guarantees, and interest on obligations. In 1877 the deficit in the annual payment due from the railways to the State amounted to 450.5 millions of roubles, while those of all the other debtors of the State (the peasants included) totaled up to only 154.7 millions, the railway companies thus engrossing seventy-four per cent. of the famous “arrears” (*nedoimki*) which are the plague of our finances. In the following year the railway debts had increased to seventy-seven per cent. of the total arrears, and rose subsequently to eighty per cent. In 1884 the total amount of railway debts was stated to be 886,000,000 roubles. In reality, however, it was more, because the Ministry passed a resolution to strike out of the list forty millions as “perfectly hopeless.” Thus the total of railway debts in 1884 was about one and a-half times as much as the entire revenue of the State (Russian Almanac, 1886, p. 192).

It might appear from this that the railways are the most disastrous of the many ruinous Russian State enterprises, and that the companies are running the country towards the verge of bankruptcy. In reality, however, it is not so. The prospects of the railways are as bright as anything

can be in Russia. The railways are, on the whole, very prosperous. They are extending rapidly, and the profits of the companies are increasing both absolutely and as compared with former years. In the period from 1870 to 1877, each mile earned in gross receipts on an average fourteen per cent. more than in the preceding period. The expenses having in the same time augmented considerably, the net increase is not so great, being three per cent. per mile. In the following five years the increase of the gross receipts was ten per cent. for each mile. The dividends received by the shareholders in 1870 amounted to 32.5 millions of roubles; in 1877 they were 71.7 millions, an increase of 2.5. Nevertheless, the indebtedness of the railways to the State shows for the same period an increase of one hundred and fifty per cent.

This seems contradictory and rather puzzling. The explanation of the riddle is, however, very simple. The various railway lines are not equally profitable, and the Government, while leaving the extra profits of the best lines to their respective shareholders, has to make up the deficiency of the remainder.

It comes practically to this:—The State, which

has supplied the railway companies either directly or indirectly with all their funds, surrenders the profits of the enterprise to individual capitalists, taking for itself only the losses. In other words, the peasants (for as they contribute eighty-three per cent. of the whole budget they are the real paymasters) are paying a group of individual capitalists a tribute amounting from 1878 to 1882 to an average of forty-six millions of roubles a year.

Let us now ascertain what are the normal use and functions of this network of railways so dearly bought by the peasants. The railways transport freight and passengers, and statistics show that in Russia both are chiefly of rural origin.

The passengers first. We have to observe before anything else that passengers of the third class make eighty-three per cent. of the whole and pay sixty-seven per cent. of all the receipts for fares. Thus even here, as everywhere else, the peasant is the main prop of the business. Why do our peasants travel so much? Not, of course, for pleasure or for health, but in search of work. The traffic returns are very significant as to the extent to which the receipts are derived from the agricultural classes. During the winter months the passenger traffic is at its lowest ebb.

In March, when field labour begins in the vast southern region of the empire, we observe, on the other hand, a sudden increase of 19·5 per cent. In April, when field labour extends to the central zones, there is a still greater increase—twenty-four per cent. over the previous month. In the following months the increase continues, though less rapidly; the workers are at their posts busy with their work. In August the number of passengers attains its *maximum*; the workers have done, and return after the harvest to their homes, in a body. In September the passenger traffic drops suddenly to 33·74 per cent., and goes on decreasing until the following March.

The passenger traffic, in fact, corresponds with the cycle of agricultural work. It is represented by a single wave, having its greatest amplitude in the autumn and its lowest in the winter. This is an indirect but striking confirmation of Mr. Tchaslavsky's calculations that even in the outdoor employment of our peasantry the agricultural branch has an overwhelming preponderance over the industrial.

The fluctuations in the passenger traffic show that they are the natural corollary of the periodical migrations of the tillers of the soil. The month

of August, when the workers are returning whole-sale to their penates, leaving behind them the produce they have harvested, presents, as we have seen, the greatest amplitude of the migratory wave. The same month gives the lowest returns for heavy freights carried at low speeds. Time is required for the collection of the produce by the hands which forward it to its destination. But in September the heavy traffic returns show a rise of 19.46 per cent., and the rise continues in October. But in November there is a sudden drop of 20.5 per cent. What does it mean? The hard winter has frozen the rivers, thus hindering the carriage of corn and other agricultural products to the railway stations by water, the usual method, the transport by horses and oxen and carriages being too expensive. During the winter months there is little shipping of produce. But in March, when the rivers of the southern provinces are reopened to navigation, traffic increases 14.57 per cent. In May, when the navigation is open throughout Russia, the increase is 40.27 per cent., the same high rate being maintained in June. The pressure is then over, heavy traffic diminishes, and the diminution goes on until the following September. Goods

traffic, in fact, like the passenger traffic, corresponds with the cycle of the agricultural year, with this difference—that while the shipping of merchandise, owing to climatic conditions, is divided into two pulsations, the movement of passengers has but one.

Now let us consider the other part of the mechanism—first, the all-powerful agent which sets in motion all this vast machinery,—money. Ordinary banks were first introduced into Russia in 1864. Before that time the “Bank of the State”—the official bank of the Empire—was practically the sole institution of the sort in Russia. In 1864 its capital amounted to fifteen millions of roubles, with 262·7 millions of private deposits. Of this sum forty-two millions only were used for commercial purposes by way of advances on mercantile paper. In 1877 the capital of all the banks amounted to 167·8 millions, the deposits to 707·5 millions of roubles. In these thirteen years banking capital was increased more than eleven-fold, and the deposits more than three-fold (3 $\frac{1}{4}$). At the same time the method of employing banking capital underwent a thorough change. In 1864 only fifteen per cent. of the capital was, as we have seen, employed in dis-

counts. In 1877 almost the whole—ninety-six per cent.—was used in this way. Loans and discounts for business purposes show a still more rapid increase. From 23·7 millions in 1864 the bills under discount rose to five hundred millions of roubles, more than twenty-one times as much. With the enormous increase in banking capital the rapidity of its circulation has moreover doubled. In 1863, the entire deposits were turned over about twice in a twelvemonth (1·85). Thirteen years later they were turned over nearly five times in the same period.

The increase of money power has been enormous, the progress of commerce almost febrile in its intensity. Now, what are its objects and character? Banking statistics give a peremptory answer. Its chief object is the manipulation of raw agricultural produce.

It must be observed, by way of explanation, that, notwithstanding the great development of banking facilities, the vast majority of commercial transactions are settled with ready money. According to the accounts of the Bank of the State, of all the bills discounted by the Bank and its branches only fourteen per cent. are not liquidated where they are drawn. The ready money

thus obtained is used for the payment for grain and other produce.

Let us examine how this transfer of money varies during the year. The circulation of money is at its lowest ebb twice a year. Its active period begins about the end of harvest time, in July; but very slowly at first, the rise being only 1·06 per cent. In August it makes a sudden leap of 19·31 per cent. In September the increase is still greater—38·03 per cent.—and it remains at the same figure during October. November is marked by a decrease of 46·44 per cent., and at this level it remains until February. Then in the spring it begins to rise once more, showing in May a total increase of 47·8 per cent. Thus the double pulsation of money exactly corresponds with the fluctuations of railway traffic receipts, which, as we have seen, are at their highest in September and May. In the centre of our financial system, St. Petersburg, the streaming out of money somewhat precedes the influx of corn. The money which leaves St. Petersburg accumulates for a short time in the provincial banks, whence it flows to the various local corn markets, where the produce is stored in September and in May.

The two waves which represent the yearly pulsation of money—the autumn wave and the spring wave—though quite similar as to their exterior form, differ greatly as to their object and significance.

The produce sold in the spring is that of the previous year, which, owing to the freezing of the rivers, could not be moved sooner. The money remitted from the centres to the provinces during the spring season is used solely for speculative purposes. The grain passes from one buyer to another, and capitalists now begin to struggle among themselves.

The September circulation of money is of quite a different nature. It signifies that the capitalists are coming into direct contact with the producers. Now not only the corn stores but the granaries of the millions of peasants are filled with as much grain as they are allowed by the fates to possess. The smallest village becomes during this season a little corn market. The quantity of potential bread which the farmer sells or keeps for his own consumption is not yet settled, his need of money contending with his desire for food. The greater the amount of money thrown on the market the greater will be the victory of the capitalist over

the producer. The capitalists, therefore, strain every nerve to have the best of the battle. The cash reserves of the banks—State as well as private—are heavily drawn upon. Private deposits are also utilized for the same purpose. The September deposits sink to 0.35 per cent. of their yearly average. All the disposable capital of the Empire finds its way into the hands of the corn merchants, whose agents traverse the country far and wide, doing their utmost to obtain from the peasants as much of their yearly harvest, and leave them as little, as they can, because it is on the success of these operations that depends their profit for the year.

Finally, in this critical moment of the struggle between the purses of the merchants and the stomachs of the peasants, the State intervenes in favour of capital by making a new issue of paper money.

It must be remembered that in Russia, "money," so far as interior markets are concerned, means exclusively paper money. Silver and copper coin is used for small change only. Commercial transactions are carried on by "credit roubles," which are nominally convertible into gold and silver, but in reality are not convertible at all,

but only saleable at their effective value, which fluctuates between sixty and sixty-five per cent. of their nominal value.

The abuse of this privilege of issuing paper money is one of the many causes of the miserable condition of our finances. But in the regular course of affairs this potent means of influencing the market is altogether subservient to the interests of the capitalists.

Paper money is subject during the year to a double process—the periodical issues and withdrawals, apart from the mere substitution of new for worn notes. The regular issues (omitting exceptional cases) begin at the end of summer, “to reinforce the branches,” precisely when the money begins to stream rapidly from St. Petersburg to the provinces. The issues are increased as the demand for money increases on the corn market. In July it is twenty-one per cent. of the whole yearly issue, in August nine per cent.; in September, when the demand reaches fever heat, 56·54 per cent.—that is to say, more than one-half of the whole issue for the remainder of the year. And in the three months of the autumn market season the Exchequer issues eighty-six per cent. of the paper money of the year, whereby is caused

a depreciation of the credit rouble, which in this season can be obtained at its lowest price, both in the world's money markets and in all Russian financial centres. But the cost of the operation is borne by the *moujiks*. The wave of depreciation of the paper rouble does not reach the green fields of Russia, the villages and hamlets where the bargain is struck. Here the enormous mass of paper money advanced by the State and the banks to the traders keeps all its buying power, and takes from the producers the corresponding quantity of their produce.

The peasants receive the money. The autumn is the only time of the year when they have the pleasure of holding in their hands the yellow, green, and blue painted strips of paper called money. But they do not keep it long—just long enough to dirty it. They return it faithfully in the form of taxes to the State, in order that it may next year repeat the same operation with the same results. Paper money returns to the Exchequer, which can then proceed to withdraw it from circulation. This operation is effected chiefly during the winter season, the old paper money being burnt in a furnace in the courtyard of the "Bank of the State," to the great consterna-

tion and excitement of the St. Petersburg roughs, who always gather round to stare at such a strange and incomprehensible spectacle.

This brief and dry sketch shows clearly that the whole economical life of this colossal Empire—railways, banks, finances—so far as interior policy goes, is concerned with the manipulation of the agricultural produce, which, ready in August, is sold in September, and carried by the railways in the autumn and the following spring.

It remains only to indicate the end and result of this comprehensive operation. Whither is all this grain conveyed? To the great foreign markets, in order to extract from them as much gold as they can be made to yield. The interior exchange has no interest for us, since produce and money alike remain in the country.

The export of Russian corn since the Emancipation has increased with wonderful rapidity. In 1860-4 we exported nine million quarters. In the following five years the export increased to ten millions, then to twenty-one millions, and finally, 1875-79, reached its highest point—an average of thirty-three millions. The following five years, 1880-85, exhibit a sudden stoppage to this rapid progress. The export is maintained at the same

high standard of thirty-three millions a year without any further increase. We shall presently see the real significance of this ominous hitch. Still on the whole things seem to be very satisfactory. In a score of years the value of our corn exports increased sevenfold, and became the leading article of our foreign trade, the proportion being sixty-two per cent., as compared with thirty-three per cent. in previous years. In the three triennial periods from 1870 to 1879, the taxes were increased—first 6·24 per cent., then 3·89, and finally 3·69 per cent. It shows that the State, on its part, took care to profit by this apparent prosperity. As for the capitalists, they are simply rolling in wealth. In the same period their profits, as shown by the sums deposited by them in the banks, increased thirty-three per cent., then thirty-eight per cent., and finally fifty per cent. It looks splendid!

The fact which puts this capitalist splendour in quite another light is that, according to official statistics, our agriculture for the last fifteen years has been in a state of almost utter stagnation. There is a wide difference, of course, between the harvests of two consecutive years, the *minimum* (1876) being 156½ millions of quarters, the *maxi-*

num 231 $\frac{3}{4}$ millions, or forty-two per cent. more. But if we divide the period 1871-1882 into three periods, the fluctuations are seen to be insignificant (1·80 per cent.)—in point of fact, *nil*. As, moreover, in this time the quantity of corn sown increased 2·1 per cent., it results that the productiveness of agriculture even slightly diminished (0·3 per cent.). The growth of our foreign corn trade has, therefore, been forced to the detriment of the people. It has lessened the quantity of bread left for their maintenance. The population in the meantime has continually increased. In the absence of additional supplies of bread the new-comers must take what they require from the share of their elders. By comparing the increase of the population (six per cent.) with the increase of the corn export, we find that the cereal food supply available for our peasant families has fallen off on an average fourteen per cent. In other words, a Russian peasant consumes one-seventh less bread than he did fifteen years ago. Nor is this all. His food, besides being diminished in quantity, has deteriorated in quality. The best wheat (seventy-eight per cent. of the entire crop) is naturally taken for export. Practically this means the

whole, as something must needs be left for seed and the consumption of the well-to-do. The wheat flour once used by the peasants on holidays and for their children's food they can no longer afford. And now rye, their daily bread, and the oats which they require for their cattle, are also becoming large articles of export.

It has fared no better, with the live stock, which form the peasants' working power and occasional food. From 1864 to 1883 the export of cattle increased thirteen-fold, with the result that cattle have greatly diminished in number in all the provinces of Russia Proper, to the great injury both of the health of the people and the productiveness of the soil.

Thus the whole economical arrangement is doing its part admirably. All the parts of the colossal machine work into one another like the toothed wheels in clock-work. Its mainspring, which imparts life and activity to the whole concern, is money, or, to be exact, the inconvertible paper money issued by the State and put into circulation by the banks. Paper money has been issued by the Government in such enormous quantities that the credit rouble, always falling, lost between 1864 and 1882 twenty-nine per cent.

of its buying power in the world's markets. Yet in the interior markets, especially in the villages, it has hardly depreciated at all. We are without statistics as to the prices at which corn is bought from the peasants in their own villages by the local or travelling agents of capitalists.^o It is doubtful whether we shall for a long time have such statistics, owing to the character of the transactions in question, concerning which I shall say something further on. The only figures we possess refer to the prices in the markets whither the corn is conveyed after being bought from the peasants.

Now, these prices, which are obviously higher than those ruling in the smaller markets, show a rise, it is true, but only about a third of what it should be as compared with the depreciation of the credit rouble, which points to the conclusion that in the interior of Russia the average value of corn has undergone little, if any, change. This is the *crux* of the question. The enormous issues of paper money have so augmented the buying power of capitalists as to give them more and more the control of agricultural produce, a result to which the action of the banks has largely contributed, chiefly by stimulating the circulation

of capital. In the fourteen years' period during which the State increased the mass of paper money thirty-one per cent., the turnover of the banks increased by nearly seventy per cent. They have thus done twice as much for capitalists as the Exchequer has done, for by halving the time during which each rouble formerly lay dormant they have doubled its effective power. As the use of cheques and clearing offices is rapidly extending, this process is likely to be carried still further. The banks, moreover, now absorb much of the floating capital of the country, the greater part of which is placed at the disposal of corn factors exactly at the time when they are doing their utmost to take from the impoverished peasant all the produce he can be induced to sell.

The railway network, which, from nine hundred and ninety-three miles at the time of Emancipation extended in the following twenty-two years to 16,155 miles (for the whole Empire), and is still extending at the rate of about eight hundred miles each year, serves to widen and extend this activity over new districts and provinces, the chief work of the railways being, as we have seen, the transport of agricultural products and agricultural producers.

All is well combined, and the whole acts like a colossal hydraulic press, which squeezes from the peasants an ever-increasing part of their daily bread. In about fifteen years it has squeezed from them just one-seventh. From manuals of political economy we learn that when the supply of corn is diminished to the extent of a sixth of its ordinary amount the value of it rises to famine rates. Russian peasants are, however, unable to obtain higher prices; for the want of merchandize on the one hand, and possession of money on the other, are the sole factors which influence the markets. The fact remains, that, as the peasants have been compelled to sacrifice a seventh of their food supply, starvation has become their permanent condition. The economic machine has done wonders.

But how can such a miracle have come to pass? How can the peasants have been induced to give up voluntarily (because there is no compulsion on the market) that which is absolutely necessary for their own sustenance? We can well understand that a considerable rise in prices might tempt the farmers of the most prosperous country to part with a greater quantity of their produce than strict prudence would justify. But this has

not been the case in Russia. The spoliation of our peasants has been effected, not by an artificial rise in prices, but simply by an increased amount of money. Every fresh issue of roubles withdraws a corresponding quantity of bread, just as a heavy body thrown into the water displaces some of the liquid. There must, therefore, be something peculiar in Russia which diminishes the usually strong natural clinging of the cultivator to the fruit of his industry, to a surprising extent. Russian peasants, who work with relentless assiduity and pluck, on the State and capitalist treadmill, would seem to have no hold whatever over the increase which the earth yields to their labour and presumably for their advantage.

To account for such a strange state of things we must leave the higher spheres of political economy and administrative mechanism and observe what may be described as the molecular action of the system. We must descend to a Russian village, such as it has become since the Emancipation, and look into the normal economy of the peasant households of which it is composed,

CHAPTER III.

RUSSIAN peasants, as I have shown, cannot be regarded as ordinary resident owners, and herein lies the gist of our agrarian question. Let us consider more closely the how and the why of this important fact.

Serfdom, as established in Russia by law and custom, took, in the regions where it struck root, a form peculiar to itself. The landlords allotted to each peasant household a certain quantity of land, and allowed them to give to its cultivation, for their own benefit, a certain proportion of their time. For the rest of their time they laboured on their master's land for his sole benefit, receiving therefor neither food nor pay. Few were the cases—when, for instance, the master was a manufacturer—where the serfs worked for him throughout the week and were boarded and lodged at his expense.

The allotment system of land prevailed every-

where, and the Government attempted to regulate the economical relations between serf and master by a law prescribing three days as the normal proportion of gratuitous work in the landlord's fields and three days in the peasant's. This law was, however, never strictly enforced. Rapacious masters could make their peasants work as long as they thought fit. Many kept the serfs four or five, some it was rumoured six days, out of the seven, leaving only Sunday for the cultivation of their own holdings. It was evident that this state of things could not last. The economical law, that the producer's remuneration cannot fall below the *minimum* necessary for keeping him alive and enabling him to rear children, operates quickly and peremptorily in every slave-owning community. The master cannot change his slaves for an equal number of fresh ones after having worn them out. The improvident *seigneur* is inevitably ruined, and stern necessity imposed the three days' rule as being the only one which sufficed to keep the human cattle in good health and strength. It prevailed generally throughout the country. The peasants gave up to their masters three days a week, or, to speak more exactly, one half of their labour (men,

women, and horses), and kept the remainder for themselves.

The Emancipation Committees, in making forecasts of the proposed Act, took for their basis the existing apportionment of the peasant's time. Since there was every reason to suppose that the former masters had given to their serfs rather less land than was strictly necessary, it was at first agreed, and very wisely, that the enfranchised peasants should not be allotted smaller allotments than they had previously possessed. In carrying out the Emancipation Act this principle was, however, forgotten, altered, and mutilated. The enfranchised peasants received much less than they had previously enjoyed. I will not dwell on the legal tricks by which this purpose was effected; the clause of the *maximum* allowing the spoliation of the serfs of the smaller nobility; nor the paragraphs about "orphan shares," which permitted the creation of 700,000 downright proletarians. Neither shall I do more than allude to the blunders in the Emancipation Act concerning the pasture and forest arrangements, nor to the abuses in the settlement of agrarian matters since made by the executive, which in 1863 became decidedly reactionary, always favouring the land-

lords to the prejudice of their former serfs. All these details can have little interest for foreigners. Suffice it to say that the three or four dessiatines which the former serfs have on an average received, are quite inadequate to provide them with bread. In the central provinces they only have bread for two hundred days in a year, often only for one hundred and eighty, or even one hundred. The agrarian arrangement, made for the benefit of the former State peasants in 1866, was far more satisfactory than that made in connexion with the enfranchisement of the former serfs of the nobility. The State peasants were provided with twice as much land as the former serfs: a quantity sufficient on the whole to provide them with bread all the year round, supposing they had no other outgoings.

- But, besides feeding themselves and their families, the peasants have to make another outlay as peremptory as eating, while possessing none of the marvellous elasticity which distinguishes human wants in general and those of Russian peasants in particular. They must pay the taxes, which, as the reader will presently learn, are rather heavy! In 1871, ten years after the Emancipation, when the first alarming symp-

toms of impoverishment among the peasants appeared, the Government appointed an Imperial Commission to inquire into the condition of the peasantry. These inquiries brought to light the fact that in the thirty-seven provinces of European Russia the class of former State peasants pay in taxes of every description no less than 92·75 per cent. of the average net produce of their land. As for the former serfs, being, as we have said, much worse off than their brethren, the State peasants, they have to pay a total taxation amounting on an average to 198·25 per cent. of the net produce of their land.

Thus one half of our peasantry, the former State peasants, have to give up to the State almost all that the land granted to them is capable of producing. The other moiety—the former serfs—pay away almost twice as much as the yield of their holdings. These are average figures, and, of course, not applicable to many particular cases. There are State peasants paying only from thirty to forty per cent., but there are also others who pay about one hundred and fifty per cent. (Smolensk, Kostroma, Vladimir provinces.) There are former serfs paying from seventy-six to one hundred per cent. (Petersburg province) ; but

there are others who pay two hundred and fifty per cent. (Tver, Vladimir provinces), or three hundred per cent. (Kazan province), and more. In the province of Novgorod, according to the official statement, there is a class of peasants who pay five hundred and sixty-five per cent. (Janson, "Essay on Allotment," pp. 35, 36, and following). This will seem not merely exorbitant, but altogether absurd. How, it may be asked, can a farmer pay in taxes the whole amount or even twice or thrice as much as he gets from his land and yet live?

The solution of the enigma lies in the smallness of the allotments. • Being insufficient to furnish the peasants and their families with bread, they do not engross the whole of their working time. With our climate and our system of husbandry a peasant family, averaging seven to eight members, can cultivate fifty-four acres. Our peasants have only about a fourth of this, and the smaller their holdings the heavier relatively they are taxed. Former serfs, who spend on their diminutive allotments a fourth of their working time, and State peasants, who spend on theirs a little more than a third of their time, therefore pay to the State a half and a third respectively, because as

touching the remainder of their work they are hardly taxed at all. These are heavy burdens. What would an English taxpayer say if he had to give up a third or a half of his income, however small it might be? But the thing is comprehensible and clear.

It is equally clear that our peasants, though "landed proprietors" in the eyes of the law, would not be so considered by an economist. Neither, on the other hand, could he classify them as agricultural proletarians. They stand between the two. On the average, our peasants of both classes can get from their land only about one-third of their livelihood, taxes included, hence the remaining two-thirds must be obtained by out-door work, and they are constrained to seek occupation as day labourers, home artisans, *métayers*, and so forth. They stand, in fact, one-third above the downright agrarian proletarian and two-thirds below the ordinary small resident owner.

We shall, however, fail to realize the condition of our agricultural classes if we do not take into account the fluctuations of harvests. Were harvests always the same, our peasants would have to devote to their land exactly the same amount of time every year, and every year there

would be the same supply of labour in the labour market. The position would then be clear and constant for both parties—employers and employed. But it is not so in reality. Far from being constant, the harvest in Russia shows the widest fluctuations, depending, as it needs must in a country where agriculture is so primitive and backward, altogether on the caprices of nature and climate. The normal yield of grain is very low—only 2·9 for one (seed excluded) is the average for the whole Empire. But it varies greatly from year to year. In the fertile south-eastern and southern provinces, where agriculture is technically the worst, the fluctuations are the greatest. In the Middle Volga provinces in an average bad year the land yields three for one; in an average good year twelve for one; in a middling, six for one; in an exceptionally good year twenty to twenty-five for one. For Southern Russia in general the variations of the harvest are eighty-seven per cent. In the central provinces, where the system of culture is technically somewhat better, the difference between the yearly harvests is not so great, reaching, however, forty-nine, forty-seven, and twenty-one per cent. (Janson).

This state of things materially affects the mutual relations of landlords and peasants, and prevents any approach to regularity in the annual supply of labour. In an average year labourers in plenty can be obtained at average rates. In a bad year the peasants are in sore trouble and distress. They run after work in all directions and take it at starvation wages. In an exceptionally good year the position is reversed. The bulk of the peasants have plenty of work in harvesting their own crops, which they will never abandon for ordinary wages. Working on their own land they earn at the same time wages, rent, and the profit on capital. A day's labour for himself brings the peasant in as much as the wages of three days' work. So it comes to pass that there is a dearth of labour at the very moment when the landlords are most in need of hands to gather an abundant harvest. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that wages vary enormously. In bad years the wages in the Middle Volga provinces are from seventy to a hundred per cent. lower than in good years. In years of exceptional abundance wages are so high in the south-eastern provinces, the Russian granary, that it does not pay to reap the harvest unless 4,000 lbs. of wheat,

or thirteen to one, are expected from a dessiatine. The field which does not promise thus much is left unharvested, and the ripe grain perishes under the burning sun.

Letting alone exceptional cases, it may be said that every change in the harvest reacts in a contrary sense, but in much greater proportion, on the prices paid for agricultural work. The widely differing condition of the peasants, consequent on the varying size of their holdings, causes every change in the harvest to throw in or out of the labour market a varying quantity of hands.

Nothing can be more absurd or disastrous for both parties and for the country in general than such a system as this. Professor Engelhart, writing from the Smolensk province, truly observes that very high wages would be better for the landlords than these perpetual variations. A fixed rent for land and a fixed interest on capital invested in agriculture should once for all be established. As things are, every year takes its chance, and all is based on speculation. M. Giliaransky, writing about the opposite extremity of the Empire, the region of the enormous cereal plantations of the Middle Volga, comes to the same conclusion, and vividly ex-

presses it by saying that in his country professional usurers and landlords holding 150,000 acres are the only members of the community whose solvency is not open to doubt. The smaller fry know not whether in another year they will be utterly ruined or rolling in wealth.

There could be only one issue from this indescribable economical chaos. The landlords, certainly the stronger of the two contending parties, being unable to secure a regular supply of low-priced labour by means of economic compulsion, have had to resort to a more direct and brutal form of constraint.

This they have found in the new system of bondage, or, to use the Russian word, the *kabala*, which has become an important and continually increasing influence in Russian rural life, and is in effect a simple revival, in a somewhat milder form, of the ancient serfdom.

CHAPTER IV.

THE word *kabala* is very ancient. In old annals and juridical records it was used to designate the document, by which a destitute but free man sold himself to some rich man as his slave. Later on it was used colloquially to signify the state of slavery. One would have thought that after emancipation there should have been no further occasion for this ill-omened word, that it should have become obsolete. But it was not allowed to die, and is now used by Russian peasants to denote that dependency of the labourer on his employer which arises from the former's irretrievable indebtedness and impunctuality.

That a modern Russian peasant is always liable to fall deeply into debt is unfortunately too easily demonstrated. The ordinary peasant household, taking peasants of every class, has to give up in taxes of all descriptions forty-five per cent. of its whole income (industrial work included), or in

other terms about 'three days' work in a week. This is rather heavy, of course. The old democrat Ogareff, co-editor with Herzen of the London *Kolokol* (*Bell*), was quite right in stigmatizing the agrarian arrangement of 1861 as a new sort of serfdom, in which the State was substituted for the former *seigneurs*. Having only three days' in the week, or, what is the same, one-half of the family's working force for their own behoof, it follows that in order to make both ends meet—to live and pay taxes—the peasants must contrive never to be out of work.

Now all the employments open to them are very uncertain. The rent of land, hired from neighbouring lords for short terms, generally a year, is very heavy, owing to the fierce competition of the whole body of peasants. In the thickly-populated black earth region, the rent has risen since the Emancipation three and four fold in twenty years. On the character of the harvest depends entirely the peasants' chance of profit—if there be any. Agricultural work for wages is still more precarious. If in the far distant provinces, whither the peasants rush in swarms from the thickly-populated centres, the crops are good, the local people keep to their own fields, wages run

high, the new-comers find employment readily, and return to their homes with money in their pockets. If, however, the harvest be bad they earn nothing, and have to make their way back barefoot and penniless, begging, in Christ's name, a crust of bread to keep themselves alive.

The indoor industries, in which the majority of Great Russian (Central) peasants are mostly engaged, are less remunerative than formerly, owing to the competition of the great manufactories on the one hand, and the gangrene of usury, to which all these home-working artisans are more and more exposed, on the other.

Work in manufactories is naturally the most certain. But it requires a special training, and occupies less than a million hands, one half of whom are ordinary town proletarians. Thus the economical position of our peasants is most strained and precarious. Notwithstanding their surprising industry and courage, their future is never sure. A deficit in their yearly budget is always possible, and indeed of frequent occurrence, leaving them no alternative save insolvency at the hands of the Government, or, a diminished consumption of food. These expedients, however, cannot be adopted indefinitely. The patience of

tax-collectors is very short, and when exhausted is quickly followed by severe floggings and the forced sale of the insolvent's belongings.

The power of self-restraint is very great with our peasants, and the elasticity of their stomachs is simply surprising. But even these qualities have their limits. Both children and adults, when the last crust of bread is consumed, will ask for more, and the cattle, which with Russian peasants is an object of even greater solicitude than their children, cannot be left to starve. The peasant makes up his mind and looks around for some "benefactor" from whom he can borrow something.

Here we must pause. We are now at the turning-point of our social life, and the new figure which has to play the most prominent part therein is stepping on to the stage—we mean the "benefactor" or usurer. He is of two strongly marked types. The more numerous, and by far the more important of the class, socially and politically, are those who have themselves sprung from the ranks of the peasants. These are *koulaks*, or *mir*-eaters, as our people call them. They make a class apart—the aristocracy, or rather the plutocracy, of our villages. Every village commune has always three or four regular

koulaks, as also some half-dozen smaller fry of the same kidney. The *koulaks* are peasants who, by good luck or individual ability, have saved money and raised themselves above the common herd. This done, the way to further advancement is easy and rapid. They want neither skill nor industry, only promptitude to turn to their profit, the needs, the sorrows, the sufferings, and the misfortunes of others.

The great advantage the *koulaks* possess over their numerous competitors in the plundering of the peasants, lies in the fact that they are members, generally very influential members, of the village commune. This often enables them to use for their private ends the great political power which the self-governing *mir* exercises over each individual member. The distinctive characteristics of this class are very unpleasant. It is the hard, unflinching cruelty of a thoroughly uneducated man who has made his way from poverty to wealth, and has come to consider money-making, by whatever means, as the only pursuit to which a rational being should devote himself. *Koulaks*, as a rule, are by no means devoid of natural intelligence and practical good sense, and may be considered as fair samples of that rapacious

and plundering stage of economic development which occupies a place analogous to that of the middle ages in political history.

The regular landlords, remnants of the old nobility, or new men, who have bought their land and stepped into their shoes, also play a very conspicuous part in the operations of rural credit, though, being total strangers in the communes, they are naturally less directly responsible for the interior decomposition of our village life. Acting as a rule through their managers and agents, who have no personal interests to serve, these large proprietors are in reality the least exacting of the gang. Yet, when in difficulty the peasant will always try the *koulaks* first, who are peasants like himself. He dreads the formalities, the documents, the legal tricks and cavils which the big people have in store for a "benighted" man.

In the extensive operations of rural credit, consisting chiefly of small advances, but amounting in the aggregate to many millions of roubles yearly, the *koulaks* and rural usurers generally gain a far greater profit than do the landlords proper.

The petty capitalists who settle in the villages for business purposes, small shopkeepers, wine dealers, merchants, who always combine their

special trade with more or less extensive land culture, occupy an intermediary position between that of the *koulaks* and the big landlords. They are outsiders like the latter, having by our laws no share in the administration of the commune, which is exclusively controlled by born or naturalized peasants. But by their education (or better, absence of education) and general tenor of life they are as near to the peasants as the *koulaks*, and by no means inferior to the latter in knowledge of local conditions, or in pluck, roughness, and cruelty.

Such are the classes who control rural credit. Whatever be its individual source in each particular case, it is based on the same principle and produces the same social results. I shall therefore analyze its forms and influence cumulatively.

Regular credit—i.e., advance of money to be returned in money, with the addition of interest—is very rare in our villages, unless it refers to trifling sums advanced by rural pawnbrokers. Peasants receive too little ready money to be able to depend on it for the discharge of their obligations. Loans are generally made only to whole villages or to peasants' associations under the

guarantee and responsibility of the *mir*. As to the interest required, and the general character of these loans, they remind us rather of Shylock's bond than of ordinary business transactions.

In January 1880, a large village of the Samara province, Soloturn, borrowed from a merchant of the name of Jaroff the sum of £600, interest being paid in advance, and bought from Jaroff's stock 15,000 puds of hay for their starving cattle. Repayment was to be made on October 1st, 1880, under the condition that £5 should be added for every day's delay. When the time of payment arrived the peasants brought £200 on account of their debt to Jaroff, who made not the slightest objection to waiting for the balance. For eleven months thereafter he kept quiet. But in September 1881 he brought an action against the village for £1,500. The magistrate before whom the case was tried, being evidently in a frame of mind not unlike that of Antonio's judges, decided against the plaintiff. But Jaroff was not much discouraged thereby. Confident in his right, he appealed to a higher court and won his case. And as this proceeding caused further delay the claim, by accumulation of interest, had doubled, and Jaroff got judgment for £3,000 in satisfaction.

of a debt of £600, of which £200 had been repaid! (Annals, No. 272.)

• In the Novousen district of the same province the peasants of the village of Shendorf, being in great distress during the winter of 1880, borrowed from a clergyman named K—— £700, undertaking to pay him in eight months £1,050 (*i.e.*, fifty per cent. for eight months), on condition that in case of default they should give Mr. K——, pending repayment, 3,500 dessiatines of their arable land, at an annual rent of ten copecks per dessiatine. As the peasants were unable to fulfil their engagement, Mr. K—— received the 3,500 dessiatines for 350 roubles, and forthwith re-let the land to the peasants themselves at the normal rent, which in this province is about five roubles (10s.) per dessiatine. Thus he obtained £1,715 on a capital of £700, or interest at the rate of about 250% a year. (*Idem.*)

I have quoted these examples because they possess much of what the French call *couleur locale*, and are eminently suggestive of the spirit and flavour of the financial transactions practised in our villages. They give also an idea of the great distress which prevails among peasants during the winter months, because nobody, unless

on the verge of starvation, would enter into such engagements as those I have described.

The winter is, indeed, the hardest season of the year for our peasantry. The spring, too, has its difficulties, but by then field-work is beginning on the neighbouring landlords' estates, and the peasants have a chance of earning a trifle. In the winter their resources are at their lowest ebb, for in September the corn was sold, to pay the autumn taxes, whilst others fall due in the spring. If the household be not well off it generally has some arrears to make up, which are "flogged out" in winter. In a word, and to use their own expression, calamities beset the poor peasants from every quarter, "like snow on their heads," and they cannot avoid turning towards their "benefactors," and consenting to the most Shylockian conditions.

Regular money credit, even at the heaviest interest, is, as I have said, exceptional. Individual peasants never obtain it from a rich man, because he will not trust them without good security. Credit is mostly given on the security of the peasants' work, their hands being their most valuable possession. It assumes the form of payment in anticipation for work to be done in

the next season—a sort of hypothecation of work, to be performed several months thereafter.

Agreements of this kind are always legalised at the communal offices, and often copied in their register books; it is very easy therefore to obtain a fair idea of their character. Investigators of various branches of our agrarian work have preserved for us these interesting documents.

I now have before me three such deeds—one referring to the beetroot sugar plantations of the south-west; a second to the rafting of wood and timber down the rivers; an occupation in which the peasants of the northern sylvan regions find their chief livelihood; and a third, which refers to purely agricultural work. In two the terms are almost identical, and even in the third the difference is but slight. Mr. Tchervinsky says that in his province there are special scribes, who, having learnt the wording of these documents by heart, make their living by rewriting them for each occasion, changing only the names. Mr. Giliaransky transcribes the form of agreement for agricultural work from a *printed* original. I will give here a summary of the latter, as being the most important and characteristic, and as affording fair idea of the others.

These agreements always begin by setting forth in great detail the work to be done, and fixing the number of dessiatines to be sown, ploughed, or harvested. Then follow a series of paragraphs intended to secure due observance of the conditions on the part of the peasant :—

“I, the undersigned, agree to submit myself to all the rules and customs in force on the estates of N. N. During the period of work I will be perfectly obedient to N. N.’s managers, and will not refuse to work at nights, not only such work as I have undertaken to do, as set forth above, but any other work that may be required of me. Moreover, I have no right to keep Sundays and holidays.”

For securing good work the imposition of heavy penalties is agreed to beforehand by the subscriber, generally four or five times in excess of any damage his negligence can occasion, thereby ~~affording~~ a hundred pretexts for malversations, and yet quite failing in preventing the work from being on the whole very badly done.

A very important proviso remains to be noticed. The agreement never omits to mention that it retains its binding power for an indefinite number of years. Thus, if the landlord should not require his debtor to work in the immediately following summer (as might happen were the harvest de

ficient, and labour cheap and easily obtainable) he is free to call on him to liquidate his debt in the following year, or even the year after, thus securing for himself cheap labour at the time when wages are likely to be at their *maximum*.

The concluding paragraph is to the same effect. It states that *should the debtor be unable or unwilling to discharge his debt, or a part of it, in work, and desire to discharge it in ready money, he must pay a prescription amounting to four or five times the original loan.*

The reader will perceive that the peasants do no violence to the exact etymological value of the word in calling the winter agreement *kabala*, or bondage.

As to the purely economical side of the question—the rate of usury enforced under this system of anticipated payment of wages—we have only to compare the difference between the average wage of the labourer hired in summer and that of the unfortunates who are compelled to give themselves “in bondage” during the lean months of winter.

Here I quote a few well authenticated statements referring to the entire agricultural zone of the Empire. According to Mr. Trirogoff, the

harvesting of one dessiatine in the province of Saratoff costs on an average eight roubles if carried by labourers engaged in the summer at market rates, whilst the labourer engaged in the winter receives three or four roubles for the same work. It is no uncommon thing, he adds, to see labourers of each class working side by side, the one for ten the other for three and a half roubles per dessiatine. Mr. Giliaransky states that in the Samara province the whole rotation of agricultural work for a dessiatine of land costs fifteen to twenty roubles at ordinary rates. But those labourers who are engaged in the winter are on an average only paid five roubles. In the Tamboff province, according to Mr. Ertel, free labourers receive from nine to eleven roubles, while the "bondage" (winter engaged) labourers are paid only from four to five. ~~In the~~ Kieff province, on the beetroot plantations, the free workers receive eight roubles and upwards for fifteen days' work, the bondage labourers only three. In the Kamenez-Podolsk province (south-west) the daily wage of free labourers is forty-five copecks in the spring and sixty copecks in summer, while the bondage labourers are paid in the same season fifteen and twenty copecks.

Thus in the Samara province the money-lenders

exact an interest equal to three hundred per cent., in Saratoff two hundred per cent., in Tamboff one hundred and eight, in Kieff one hundred and sixty-six, in the Kamenez-Podolsk two hundred per cent. on their capital, lent for a period generally not exceeding nine months.

This looks very ugly. But if the reader thinks these are exceptional extortions, of which a few greedy usurers alone are guilty, he is mistaken. There is no lack of exceptions, but they present an even blacker picture. In November and December 1881 the judge of the Valuj district (Voronej Province) had to give judgment upon forty-five suits against as many groups of peasants for failure to fulfil their engagement with their landlord J. The facts were that during the winter months of 1881 the latter advanced to the peasants of several surrounding villages a quantity of straw, wherewith to feed their cattle. The peasants had promised, as usual, to harvest for him a fixed number of dessiatines, but many—in all forty-five groups—had failed to observe the conditions agreed upon. To give an idea of these conditions I may mention that one of the groups, in a moment of sore distress, had engaged

to harvest, in return for twelve cubic yards of straw advanced to them, no less than thirty-five dessiätines of corn. They harvested twenty-one dessiätines, which represented at current prices one hundred and five roubles, but being unable to harvest the remaining fourteen dessiätines they had to pay one hundred and thirty roubles more. Thus two hundred and thirty-five roubles were demanded for about 'five roubles' worth of straw. I leave the reader to calculate how much per cent. such usury denotes.

In the Oufa Province there are two great villages called Usman and Karmaly, with about 1,200 inhabitants. The peasants hold in common 3,890 dessiätines of land. In 1880 they borrowed from a clerk named Rvanzeff 1,019 roubles wherewith to pay their taxes. For this loan they agreed to let to him all their 3,890 dessiätines of land for three years at two roubles a dessiätine, whereas the *minimum* rent in this district is six to seven roubles. In 1881 the peasants, now left without land, rented their own holdings from Rvanzeff at seven to eight roubles a dessiätine, thus giving this gentleman a profit of 20,895 roubles, or an interest of 2,000 per cent. for the first year, and three times that amount if all the

three years are taken together, on a capital of 1,019 roubles. (*Golos*, 1882, No. 113.)

Here is another instance, which is not confined to a few groups of individual peasants. In 1879, in the Province of Oufa, the whole harvest was bought from the Bashkir peasants for an advance of twenty kopecks per poud (40lb.) made during the winter. The next autumn it was resold to the same Bashkirs for one rouble twenty kopecks (120 kopecks) per poud, making an interest of 500 per cent. for about eight months.

This is really exceptional, though many pages could be filled with similar examples, which each year brings to light. It is what is called in Russia "usury." The transactions as to which I have calculated the approximate interest in various provinces are not considered usurious at all. They are only "private winter engagements," which are imposed every year on millions of peasants in every region of the empire—in the agricultural and in the industrial as well as in the sylvan. Far from considering it as something to be ashamed of, the money-lenders always pose as the peasants' "benefactors," in that they have consented to lend them money on such easy terms.

Whatever be the name we give to it, usury always remains usury, and everywhere possesses the attribute of gradually swallowing up all those who have the misfortune to step within its bounds, like a quaking bog. After discharging out of his very modest and strained resources such exorbitant claims as I have described (no matter what form the usury takes), the peasant will, generally speaking, be worse off the next autumn than he was the year before. He will have greater difficulty in defraying the taxes and in providing for his own wants. Unless unusually good luck befall him, he will be obliged during the winter to apply once more, and probably for a larger advance, to his "benefactor." Very often he will have been unable to execute all the heavy obligations previously undertaken. Some arrears will still remain to be added, with accumulated interest, to his debt of work, a debt from which he can never, except by the help of some windfall or God-send, escape.

Only very large families, which are becoming less common, are able to extricate themselves from the usurer's net in which they have been by dire misfortune entangled. When the liability is divided amongst twelve or more adults they

may compensate for the absence of one or two of their number "given in bondage" by increased diligence on the part of those that remain. But small families almost inevitably succumb. Mr. Triroff tells us that the peasants themselves are convinced that when a man has once been caught by the rural usurer he must remain "in bondage" to the end of his days. And in nine cases out of ten this proves true.

Thus the new economical *régime* which has struck root in Russia is not only extending but acquiring a permanent force. "In the Saratoff Province whole districts are in a state of bondage" (Triroff). "In the Samara Province there are many villages, small and great, which have the bulk of their working strength pawned, or given in bondage, to use the peasant's expression, for many years to come, to sundry large corn growers" (Giliaransky). In the Ousman district alone (Tamboff Province), according to Mr. Ertel's very moderate estimate, the winter engagements amount to 240,000 roubles, equal to about 500,000 roubles a year at market value. There is no Province, no district, in which the system does not extensively obtain.

In some provinces it becomes from the first

a permanent bondage without the money-lender having the trouble and expense of rebinding his client every year, or of involving him in the net of accumulated interest. One of the experts for the Kherson Province made the following statement before the official inquiry commission, as registered in its official records :—"With us," he said, "there exists another mode of harvesting, extremely ruinous for the peasants. They receive from some landlord a loan of ten roubles (£1), and in return are under the obligation of harvesting, in lieu of interest, one dessiatine of corn and two dessiatines of hay, and of refunding the capital sum in the autumn. If, however, the money is not refunded, the same agreement holds good for the next year, and so on. New loans are not refused, but are made under the same conditions. Thus the peasants gradually fall into a state of bondage worse than was the old serfdom, for they are generally unable to refund the capital, and obliged to work from year to year quite gratuitously."

In the Province of Kieff yet another form of bondage obtains which approaches still more nearly the form of the old serfdom. Here the landlord advances eighteen roubles, for which

sum he is entitled to receive in lieu of interest two days' work per week, *i.e.*, one hundred and four days a year. The women have to do similar slave work as interest for an advance of twelve roubles. The advance of one-half of these sums entitles the landlord to one day a week. If the peasant misses a day he is mulcted in fifty kopecks (a woman thirty-five kopecks) a day, the amount being put to his debit. When these mulcts reach the sum of nine roubles for a man and six for a woman, another day a week is added by way of interest to their debt. (*Kieff Telegraph*, 1875, No. 52.)

At this point, however, exploitation of the peasant's labours receives a self-acting check. Credit on the hypothecation of future earnings is limited by the amount of work which it is physically possible for the debtor to perform. In the fertile steppes of the south-western region, so highly favoured by nature and the Emancipation Act, which gave them the largest allotments, and in isolated districts where the peasants are exceptionally well off, the struggle between landlords and peasants has ended in the subjugation of the latter in the way I have described, but has gone no further. In all these places credit assumes

chiefly the form of the hypothecation of future labour.

But in less favoured regions, and especially in the densely populated central provinces of the empire, other and more desperate and ruinous forms of credit are being developed with alarming rapidity. Potential property, labour, ceases to be a sufficient guarantee for the money-lenders. The impoverished peasants, driven to despair by famine or by fear of a forced sale of their effects, borrow money right and left, undertaking to give the lenders three times more work than they are physically able to perform. To avoid disappointment and the troubles of litigation, the usurers demand as security substantial property—the very implements of agricultural work, the cattle and the land. Both produce identical and almost equally rapid results. Deprivation of cattle and loss of land go on simultaneously.

The peasant's indispensable instruments of labour, the cattle, are sold in enormous quantities. The sales are made during the winter months and in the spring, chiefly at the time when the taxes and arrears are "flogged out." This accounts for the curious fact that in the provincial towns a pound of meat is sometimes cheaper than a pound

of bread. Exports of cattle have increased for the same reason enormously; the increase since 1864 is equal to 1,335 per cent.

Statistics likewise disclose, in the thirteen Provinces of Central Russia, a decrease of 17·6 per cent. in large cattle and a reduction of 27·8 per cent. in the quantity of harvested corn, notwithstanding the increase (6·6 per cent.) of the population since 1864; the inventory of horses taken in 1882 for military purposes shows that one fourth of the peasant households no longer possess horses at all (Janson).

A peasant who has lost his cattle can no longer be considered a tiller of the soil. His imprescriptible right as the member of a village community to a share in the land becomes purely nominal and practically void. Yet, though he may give up agricultural work in his allotment, and can no longer in any way turn it to account, he still remains liable for the taxes.

Very often the peasant's road to ruin is reversed; the sale of his cattle not sufficing to meet his engagements, he is obliged to part, bit by bit, with his land. True, the laws in force do not permit peasants to sell their allotments for which the price of redemption—payment for which in

most cases extends over forty-nine years from 1861—has not been provided. But the law in this regard is evaded by the expedient of long leases. The letting of land by peasants to capitalists of the upper classes—burghers, clergymen, or nobles—is exceptional. It is done wholesale by entire *mir's*, and generally for short periods. Letting to *koulaks*, or peasant capitalists, is, on the contrary, quite common and much in vogue. It is done wholesale and retail both by groups and by individual peasants. The law cannot interfere with the mutual relations of members of the same community. At the present time, the new peasant *bourgeoisie*, the *koulaks*, legally have got into their hands vast quantities of inalienable communal land under the form of long leases, which they will hold until the “next redistribution.” The peasants, the nominal proprietors, work on it meanwhile as agrarian proletarians.

There are no complete estimates as to the area of land engrossed by this new rural aristocracy, but isolated inquiries in the central Provinces, where the process of social fermentation has been the most marked, prove it to be very considerable. Writing about one of the Tamboff districts, which are rather favoured by the agrarian settlement—

the Ousman district, where the majority of the population were formerly "State peasants"—Mr. Ertel states that in an average and rather prosperous district, which he selected for investigation, 25,258 peasants' households (one-third) "pawnd some of their land every year. The total area of land pawnd to the *koulaks* was 8,419 dessiatines a year in the mean.

Mr. Tereshkevitch, Chairman of the Statistical Board of the Poltava Province, in a work to which was awarded the great gold medal of the St. Petersburg Geographical Society, shows that in the Poltava Province, the land of the former Cossacks, inalienable by law, is concentrated, to the extent of 24 to 32·6 per cent. of the total area, in the hands of rich *koulaks*. Here 16·5 to 29·8 per cent. of the population are downright landless proletarians. Nearly one-half (forty-three to forty-nine per cent.) have their land curtailed, sometimes to one-fourth, one-fifth, and one-sixteenth of a dessiatine; so that, according to the peasant's graphic expression, "the rain falls from your own roof on to your neighbour's land." The *koulaks*, however, who constitute 5·4 per cent. of the population, have twenty dessiatines (54 acres) and upwards per household,

and among them are many who hold 100 dessiatines (270 acres), sometimes 300 dessiatines (810 acres), of the richest black soil, per household. (Report of the Geographical Society for 1885.)

Having no positive figures for the whole empire, I shall not venture to estimate, even approximately, how great a proportion of the peasants' land the *mir*-eaters, or *koulaks*, have already devoured. But we can gauge the havoc they have wrought in another way—by the number of agricultural proletarians, landless and homeless, that modern Russia possesses.

In the epoch of Emancipation Russia had no agricultural proletariat whatever. It was expected that our traditional system of land tenure, with periodical redistributions, would preserve Russia for ever from this drawback of old civilizations. Some ten years later, however, it was discovered that agrarian proletarianism had already come to be a fact. In 1871, according to the calculations of Prince Vasltchikoff, districts existed in Russia where five, ten, and even fifteen per cent. of the rural population had become downright proletarians. "Since that time" (I am quoting the words of so unimpeachable an authority as the chairman of the St. Petersburg Congress of

Russian Farmers, held on the 4th March, 1886),—
“Since that time, the agrarian proletariat has increased with alarming rapidity. . From the statistical investigations of the Moscow and other *zemstvos*, we are able to affirm that the number of proletarians has increased at least from fifteen to twenty-five per cent. This shows that one-fifth of the whole population of the empire (one-third of the rural population of Russia Proper), or *about twenty millions of souls, are agrarian proletarians*. Thus the number of proletarians we have at present is equal to the number of serfs Russia possessed before the Emancipation. And I will not venture to judge how far the life of our modern agrarian proletarian is preferable to that of the former serfs.”

Further on in the same speech the causes of this devastation and miserable condition of our agriculture are pointed out:—

“Thriving estates are those where the proprietors use ‘bondage’ (*kabala*) labour—*mir*-eaters and usurious landlords (practising the winter engagement system)—and perhaps that of peasants with large families. For all the rest, agriculture has become a risky and not very profitable business. The ‘bondage’ labour, which is

chiefly used by the landlords, is a labour of the lowest quality, much inferior to that of the former serfs ; while, the 'bondage' peasants themselves, wasting an enormous quantity of their working time on the landlords' estates, are unable to cultivate their own land even tolerably, and must drop husbandry altogether."

CHAPTER V.

THE results of emancipation, a measure from which so much was expected, must needs greatly disappoint all who are in favour of peasant ownership, especially if they have likewise put some trust in the Russian communal system of land tenure. But those who hold the opposite view will probably conclude that the process of peasant spoliation, though a painful process, and an unavoidable evil, is yet in some sort an advantage, since it may be the beginning of a new development of agriculture which will eventually put Russia on a level with Western countries and force on it the same system of land tenure.

It is quite evident that Russia is marching in this direction. If nothing happens to check or hinder the process of interior disintegration in our villages, in another generation we shall have on one side an agricultural *proletariat* of sixty to seventy millions, and on the other a few thousand landlords, mostly former *koulaks* and *mir*-eaters,

in possession of all the land. When starvation has depleted the market of some ten or fifteen millions of superfluous agricultural proletarians, the landlords will doubtless introduce an improved system of agriculture of the regular European type, and the remainder of our rural population will become common wage-labourers. Then, and only then, will there begin true agricultural progress in Russia. In the present transitory stage, however, the landlord system is technically as bad as it well can be. It is chiefly based on bondage labour, which is cheaper than any other ; cheaper than machinery, cheaper than that of the worst paid common labourers, who must be nourished after all at their master's expense, and get something (from £4 to £5 a year) for taxes and clothing. As to bondage labour, it can be got for next to nothing after the first payment. Then the work done merely represents the exorbitant interest on the trifling sums advanced years before, to which may have been added, out of pity, a few sums equally trifling.

But the peasant, enslaved by usury, has repaid his extortioners in another way—by the utter negligence, slovenliness, and dirtiness of his work. He is bound to labour on the landlord-

creditor's land, and ostensibly conforms to the conditions of his bond. No power on earth, however, can prevent his working as hastily and as badly as he is able—from doing his “level worst,” as an American would say. No amount of superintendence can compel diligence, unless, indeed, the landlord has one superintendent for every bondsman. These men cannot be terrorized and beaten into carefulness and industry as were the former serfs. On the other hand, neither is he in the least impressed, as the free wage-labourer is, by dread of dismissal. He has, in a word, no motive whatever to work well, and every reason on earth to get rid of his ungrateful task as quickly as may be. The work supplied by the bondage system is of the worst possible description. M. Gilaransky says:—

“Where the free peasants harvest five stacks, the bondage people harvest only four or three and a half. In the field you recognise at first sight the work done by bondage people and by free labourers. With the latter the freshly-mown field presents a nice, even surface, showing no trace of former vegetation, while the bondage labourers always leave long strips of grass unmown. In the fields of well-to-do peasants

you will find not a handful of spikes or straw, the closely-cut stubble field extends even and uniform like a hair-brush on every side. But the fields of the big landlords, after the bondage people's harvesting, are pictures of haste and dirt. Here and there you see black spots as if swine had been grubbing; these are places where the children, in helping their elders, have uprooted the crops with their hands. Great clumps of unreaped grain are left behind, and the whole field, covered with scattered spikes and straw, seems rather creased and trampled than mown."

With such methods as these no improvement in husbandry can be thought of. Scientific culture is impossible. The cereal planters understand all this only too well, and, taking the bondage work as it is, make splendid profits by speculating on the enormous extension of tillage, thus compensating by the extent of land cultivated for the very low technical quality of the culture.

Such few estates as are in a satisfactory, sometimes even a model state of cultivation, are those where the proprietors have adopted the heroic resolution of keeping an adequate number of permanent labourers, and paying them fair

wages—in other words, of investing considerable capital and getting for it small, though regular, returns. Such capitalist heroism is, however, necessarily exceptional. The great majority of capitalists find it much more advantageous to spend as little as possible on each acre, keeping only a small staff of managers on permanent wages, speculating on the extreme cheapness of labour, and avoiding the costly luxury of scientific agriculture.

The *koulaks* and *mir*-eaters, the new land forestallers of peasant origin, are in a much better position as touching bondage work than are their fellow loanmongers of the upper crust. These rural Crassuses very often wield the same influence in their diminutive village republics, as their protagohist, the famous Roman usurer, wielded in Rome, and for the same reasons; a *koulak* is not to be trifled with, and a poor peasant, his debtor, will think twice before cheating him as he would cheat a landlord. He well knows that the *koulak* will find a thousand occasions for revenge. Moreover, the *koulak* and all the members of his family work together on the same fields as their bondsmen, keeping constant watch over them.

On the whole, the *koulaks* and *mir*-eaters, as all observers agree, obtain by the bondage system tolerably good work. Working for a *koulak* exhausts the peasant's strength, while work on a landlord's estate is little more than a waste of time. Employing a much greater proportion of bondage work relatively to their capital than the regular landlords, and possessing the above-mentioned advantages, the *koulaks* and *mir*-eaters grow in numbers, riches, and power with startling rapidity. But being in so advantageous a position, the *koulaks* have even less inducement than the regular landlords to change their tactics and waste money on any permanent improvements. So long as there is a crowd of people on whom they can impose their yoke so cheaply and easily, their culture will continue to be as loose and predatory as it has hitherto been; only, instead of exhausting the land, as the regular landlords are doing, they are exhausting the labourer.

Thus the concentration of land in the hands of individual proprietors has imparted, as yet, neither order nor progress to our agriculture. The process of land concentration, if not stopped, will, doubtless, achieve in time both these results,

but in another way—by starving out an adequate part of our rural population. It may be added that this charitable work is going on with the greatest success. I will not go into details, neither will I harrow the reader by sensational pictures. I shall only quote figures, some statistical, which speak for themselves.

The rate of mortality in the whole of Russia is very high, fluctuating between 35·4 and 37·3 per thousand. Taking thirty-six as the mean, we find that in Russia, with its thin population and a climate as healthy as that of Norway and Sweden, the mortality is one hundred per cent. greater than in the latter, and one hundred and twelve per cent. greater than in the former of those countries. It is sixty-four per cent. greater than in Great Britain; thirty-seven per cent. greater than in Germany; and thirty-nine per cent. greater than in France.

According to Dr. Farr, a mortality exceeding seventeen per thousand is an abnormal mortality, due to some preventable cause. This standard is reached in Norway, and approached very nearly in Sweden, and in the rural districts of England (where it is eighteen per thousand), and even in several large centres of population in the United States. In England, when-

ever the death-rate rises to twenty-three per thousand a medical and sanitary inquiry of the district is prescribed by law, this mortality being considered due to some preventable cause. It cannot be otherwise in Russia with a death-rate of between 35.4 and 37.3. And it is not at all difficult to discover that this preventable cause lies in the misery of the unhappy country. The Congress of the Society of Russian Surgeons expressed exactly the same opinion at their last annual meeting, held on the 18th of December, 1885, under the presidency of M. S. P. Botkin, body-surgeon to the Emperor. After ascertaining the exact death-rate, they expressed the opinion that the primary cause of this frightful mortality is deficiency of food (bread). It is thus obvious that the reduction of one-seventh in the peasants' consumption of bread during the last twenty years, as is shown by the computation of corn exports and corn production, has not come out of the people's superfluities, but is literally wrung from their necessities.

The Congress of Russian Surgeons of December 1885 brought to light some other very suggestive facts. This high rate of mortality is not uniform throughout the Empire; it is much

greater in its central than in its peripheral regions. The high birth-rate in Russia, due to the very early marriages of our agricultural population, atones in part for the devastation produced by untimely deaths. Statistics show an average yearly increase of 1.1 per cent. (or about 1,200,000) in the number of the unfortunate subjects of the Czar. But there is no such increase in the central provinces, where the population is more dense, and the ruin of the masses proceeds with the greatest rapidity.

. In the thirteen provinces—that is to say, the whole of Central Russia—the mortality, always on the increase, reached when the last census was taken (1882) *sixty-two per thousand per annum*. Nothing approaching this prevails in any other part of Europe. It would be incredible were it not officially attested. The birth-rate in these provinces being forty-five (the normal rate for the whole Empire), this is equal to a decrease of seventeen per thousand per year. In the heart of Russia the population is being starved out.

The medical report, moreover, notices that the provinces where the mortality is greatest are those where the land produces a full supply of bread. The starving out of the peasants who till

it is, therefore, the work of "art," as I have just described, and not of nature.

Another most suggestive fact which points to the same conclusion is that Russia is the only country in the world where the mortality over a large area of open country is greater than that in the towns. In all countries possessing statistical records it is the reverse, the hygienic conditions of life and work in the open air being all in favour of the rural population. In England, for instance, the mortality is 38·8 per cent. higher in towns than in the country; in France, twenty-four per cent; and in Sweden, thirty-seven per cent. In Prussia the difference is less than in any other part of Western Europe—7·1 per cent.; yet even there it is in favour of the villages. In Russia there are fourteen provinces, with a population as great as that of the Austrian Empire, and an area three times as large, in which the death-rate of the villages is higher than that of the largest towns. In the villages of the province of Moscow, the mortality is 33·1 higher than in Moscow city; in the province of St. Petersburg the difference is 17·5; in Kazan and Kieff, with more than 100,000 inhabitants each, the mortality is less by twenty-seven and thirty

per cent. than in the villages of their respective provinces (Professor Janson's Statistics, Vol. I., p. 264).

I hardly need to add that such a striking anomaly can in nowise be put to the credit of the exceptional perfection of the hygienic arrangements of our big cities. The largest, the two capitals included, are in this respect much more nearly allied to Asiatic than to European towns.

Another startling fact is, that the official returns relating to recruits for the period from 1874 to 1887, published in 1886 by the central Statistical Board, show that the number of able-bodied young men decreases every year with appalling regularity. In 1874, when the law of universal military service was for the first time put in action, out of the total number of young people tested by the recruiting commissioners seventy and a half per cent. were accepted as able-bodied. The next year showed even a somewhat higher rate—seventy-one and a half per cent. of able-bodied. But since that date the decrease has gone on uninterruptedly. It was 69·4 in 1876. Then 69, 68·8, 67·8, 67·7, 65·8, 59·1, and finally, in 1883, fifty-nine per cent. This means a decrease of twelve and a half per cent. in

nine years in the number of able-bodied people among the flower of the nation, that is, the youth of twenty years of age, of whom eighty-five and a quarter per cent. come from the peasantry.

These facts need no comment. They admit of only one explanation; hunger and poverty have wrought fearful havoc among our rural population. This is the last work of our present *régime*. It is to this we have come after twenty-five years of incessant "progress," and the worst of it all is, that under the present *régime* the work of ruin and devastation must go on uninterruptedly, fatally, rather increasing in its rapidity than diminishing.

— For what are the chief causes of peasant degradation? Usury on the one hand and taxes on the other. The first of these causes, in the material ills which it produces, is by far the more powerful and fatal of the two. But the *koulaks*, *mir*-eaters, and usurers of all sorts would never have been able to lay hold of and re-enslave the recently enfranchised agrarian population without the aid of the tax-gatherer and his satellities. What is it that constrains the peasants to sell in September corn which they know they will be in desperate need of a few months later on? The imperious necessity of paying their taxes.

The ideal of each peasant's household is to eat the bread from their own fields, providing for the taxes by outdoor work or by some home industry. But few are able to realize their ideal. The vast majority, as I have already shown, sell a considerable proportion of their harvest in September, only to buy it back in the winter or the spring, always losing heavily thereby, because corn is cheap in September and from thirty to fifty per cent. dearer in the winter and spring. Nevertheless they commit each year this economical absurdity, which they thoroughly understand. They risk hunger, knowing well how hard it is to make money in winter. They are aware that, in such cases they will have no other resource than to "give themselves in bondage" to some *bonlak*, or landlord, and fully comprehend how disastrous such a step will be. But a peasant always counts on his luck. He thinks he can scrape up a little money and thus escape usurers altogether. And even when compelled to appeal to their ruinous assistance, the peasant lulls his fears to rest with the hope that some pitying fate will at the last moment befriend him. In any case, times moves slowly, and ruin is as yet far off,

From the taxes there is no escape, and the reckoning day comes quickly. The administration is very exacting as to arrears, for punctuality in collecting taxes constitutes the tax-gatherer's best claim for promotion and the approval of his superiors. No excuse is admitted. Even in times of famine payment of arrears is enforced by the *stanovois* and *isprauniks*. When there is neither corn nor cattle to seize in insolvent villages the police sell houses and storehouses, ploughs and harrows, by auction.

But such drastic measures as these can be resorted to but once in each village; the dispossessed peasants are turned into beggars, and can thenceforth pay nothing more. Administrators who are wise prefer other means, which, while of considerable efficacy, have no disastrous economical consequences, and may, therefore, be repeated every year and to any extent. This is flogging. Insolvent peasants are flogged in a body, in crowds and alone. To show how extensively this forcible administrative method is used in modern Russia, I may mention that during the winter of 1885-6, a tax-inspector of Novgorod province reported that in one district alone 1,500 peasants were condemned to be flogged for non-

payment of taxes. Of these, 550 had then been flogged. The remainder were awaiting their turn, and the charitable inspector interceded with the Ministry to procure them a respite.

It is, indeed, open to doubt whether even on the old slave-owners' estates there was ever so extensive an application of the rod as there now is in modern Russia, twenty-five years after the Emancipation.

It will thus be seen that that old ingredient in Russian life, the rod, still plays a very important part in the lives of the peasants. It is at the bottom of the whole system of spoliation, for the tax-collector's rod and nothing else is driving the peasantry under the wheels of the despoiler's machine, which has for its working or peripheral tools the *koulaks*, *mir*-eaters, and usurious landlords.

In the foregoing pages I have described the central or directing organs of the same machine, with its complicated economical network of banks, railways, paper money, and the rest. I have shown, as the reader may remember, that the mainspring of this colossal mechanism, and the final instrument in the abstraction of corn from the mouths of its producers, is the paper

money issued by the Government. Put in febrile motion by the banks, and concentrated in the hands of the corn merchants, this money overflows the country in September, and sweeps away with irresistible power the peasants' provision of food.

Thus both keys to the machine are held by the Government. In both cases, its action is subservient to that of the capitalists, but in both it works in their favour, giving them the necessary power over the objects, or, let us say, the victims of their manipulations—the peasants. While lending to the capitalists and the higher-class *koulaks* millions of paper money with one hand, the Government with the other hand flogs the peasants into submission to the rural agents and representatives of these capitalists—the *koulaks*, *mir*-eaters, and usurers of every description.

The terrible machine must and will do its work. With the impoverishment of the masses, the drastic measures for extorting taxes will rather become intensified than subside. Having to sustain itself more or less on a level with its powerful Western neighbours, the Empire can neither diminish its expenditure nor arrest the continual increment of the public debt. On the

other hand, the more the *koulaks* and *mir*-eaters succeed in their work of devastation the richer they become, and the more are they able to extend their operations. They never have any difficulty in finding investments for their capital in the villages; they have no need to seek candidates for loans. On the contrary, each winter as the taxes fall due, all these village usurers are besieged with suppliants who, imploring their help, submit to every humiliation which a self-satisfied and brutal upstart can inflict, if haply they may obtain from him a loan at cent. per cent.

There is no chance of the havoc being arrested. Even at the present day one-third of our formerly independent peasants are reduced to the state of homeless, down-trodden beggarly *batraks*, and in thirteen provinces the population is literally being starved out at the rate of seventeen per thousand a year. If no change is brought about, we may affirm that in another fifteen years the rate of this *descensus Averni* will be doubled.

But, the reader may well ask, is there no remedy for these heart-sickening horrors? For unless the Opposition can bring forth some

practical and acceptable proposals of reform, some scheme for ameliorating the deep-rooted evils here described, their exposition, though it may deepen the shadows and intensify the sorrows of this vale of tears, can serve no useful purpose. The question, therefore, is whether any of the parties forming the Opposition have brought forward some acceptable plan capable of immediate application for the solution of Russian agrarian—which is equal to saying social—difficulties.

Yes, there is such a solution—a solution which has been pointed out not by one, but by every section of the Opposition, by all the thinking men of the country who have studied the question, and, what is more important still, one which is supported unanimously, the *koulaks* alone dissenting, and which enjoys the good wishes of the whole of our agrarian class. Moreover, the peasants' natural good sense has suggested the very same solution of the problem to which men of science have been led by their studies. The peasants must have the land. From sham owners they must be transformed into real proprietors, able to live by their land, pay their taxes, and put something aside for the unforeseen

casualties of agrarian life, and for the gradual improvement of the cultivation of the land according to the best methods of science and the teachings of Western experience.

Is Russia sufficiently rich in land to afford the material possibility for such a reform? The question hardly needs answering. Less than one-third (twenty-seven per cent.) of the land capable of cultivation is held by the peasantry; the remaining two-thirds lie as dead capital in the hands of the government or are wasted by the landlords, who either do not cultivate it at all or convert it into an instrument of most reckless extortion. The *kabala* or "bondage" culture we have just described is the only one which exists or can exist on an extensive scale on the landlords' estates in the Russia of to-day. Now though this may be profitable to private individuals, it is absolutely ruinous to the community at large. It destroys a hundred times more wealth on the side of the peasants than it creates on that of the landlords. Neither are our landlords prospering, as I have shown by statistics in an earlier work ("Russian Storm Cloud," p. 57). If transferred to the peasants, this land, or even only a considerable part of it, would more than

suffice to set them on a firm footing at once, without requiring either any particular outlay or any additional technical knowledge.

Every average peasant family can, provided it preserve its implements of labour in good repair and the normal number of cattle, cultivate unaided fifty-four acres of land, and can earn its own living and pay its taxes with ease. The prevailing "three fields" system of culture is undoubtedly the clumsiest of its kind; under it only two-thirds of the arable land are utilised at a time, the remaining third being kept fallow in order to restore its fertility. The average return yielded by crops over the whole of Russia is moreover only 2·9 to one grain sown (excluding the seed). This is almost the *minimum*, below which regular agriculture would hardly be possible. But the "three fields" system of rotation is the cheapest form of cultivation, requiring a *minimum* outlay in implements and the smallest quantity of manure; and in the fertile regions of black soil no manure at all. It is the only system possible at the outset. But our agriculture admits of an almost unlimited improvement. *Were the Russian (European) fields cultivated as are those of Great Britain*, says E. Reilus, *Russia would produce, instead of six hun-*

dred and fifty million hectolitres of corn annually, about five milliards, which would be sufficient to feed a population of five hundred million souls. ("Geographie Universelle," vol. v., p. 859.). Add to this the fact that an enormous residue of land is laying in store for future generations. In European Russia the cultivated land is but twenty-one per cent. of the whole area, while it is sixty-one per cent. in Great Britain and eighty-three per cent. in France.

The wealth of Russia in land is enormous, and amply sufficient to transform it from a country of beggars into a land of plenty. The poverty of its husbandmen, compelled to sit on their "cat's plot," whilst enormous tracts of land lie waste around them, is a monstrous crime against nature as well as against humanity. A simple reorganization of our absurd agrarian system will put an end to this, and enable the peasants to start on the work of economical progress and emulation.

The urgency of this reform, the impossibility of going on without it, and the universal desire for it, are guarantees that, were Russia free to assert her will and manage her own affairs, it would speedily be realized. But it is evident that only a free Russia can and will undertake so radical a

reform. The decrepit autocracy has neither the moral strength to risk it nor the material means necessary for its accomplishment. All the Government has done by way of satisfying the despairing cry for more land and of silencing the clamour made about it by the democratic part of the press, was the foundation, in May 1882, of the so-called "peasants' land bank," for facilitating the acquisition by peasants of saleable land. The means placed at the disposal of this bank were, however, so small (only five million roubles a year, while the Government pays to the railway shareholders alone an annual tribute of forty-six millions) that the bank is unable to supply even the yearly increase of population with land; and its statutory arrangements are such that it can advance money only to those who already possess something—the *koulaks* and groups of well-to-do peasants, and not the destitute—thus increasing the segregation and concentration of land into a few hands instead of distributing it more widely. Nothing better, indeed, could be expected from our Government.

But let us suppose, for argument's sake, the Autocrat of Russia, head of the privileged of every class—let us suppose him transformed into a Czar-

Democrat such as some foolish *narodniks* have imagined. I affirm that the most radical agrarian reform initiated by him without the abolition of the present political organization would be quite inadequate to permanently improve the condition of our peasantry.

The mischief already wrought by the present system is too deeply seated to be remedied by mere grants of land. Many of the peasants, no fewer than twenty millions, are unable to cultivate the little land they already possess for lack of cattle and implements—that is, in two words—industrial capital. After the grant of new land they can neither start afresh nor rise to material ease without enjoying for a certain time the benefit of cheap credit. Without this aid they would have to apply once more to the *koulaks*, who would demand their two hundred and three hundred per cent., and thus repeat the same process of enslavement and spoliation, only on a larger scale than before.

The reliance placed by our peasants on their collective strength, educated as they are in the traditions of their *mir*,—together with the remarkable honesty, fairness, and sense of duty displayed by these *mir*s in their dealings when

they are really independent—greatly facilitate such operations as those in question. The union of the peasants of one village offers a far greater security than any individual landlord can give, always provided, of course, that the *mir* has real and full control over its affairs. A *mir* is, moreover, a natural and permanent assurance company for all its members in case of unforeseen misfortune, acting thus as preserver of the otherwise unstable economical equilibrium.

Under the present *régime* the *mir* plays this part only in exceptional cases, where the commune is not totally destitute. It is generally composed of a mass of beggars, who cannot afford the assistance they would otherwise give, and of a few *koulaks* and *mir*-eaters, who sell their help at the price I have named. Still less can the modern bureaucratic *mir* be trusted with any money, be the amount great or small.

The modern *mir* is completely subject to the local police and the administration, which allow it the free exercise of its powers of self-government only when there is no inducement for officials to interfere. Whenever any profit is to be made the *stanovoi* and *ispravniks* are always at hand, using every means in their power, from threats

and ear-boxing to flogging, to enforce their will. The abuse of authority on the part of inferior police agents and administrators, and their cruel treatment of the helpless peasantry, form one of the most sickening and bloody chapters in the annals of Russian autocracy.

The common and unfailing expedient used by these officers for getting their fingers into the pie is to get one of their minions nominated to the post of "head-man" (*volost*) and manager of the communal finances,—of some *koulak* or *mir*-eater—who will repay their support by giving them a share in the booty.

The embezzlement of peasants' money by administrators of this stamp goes on as impudently here as in the Czar's Government generally. It is certainly practised on a more extensive scale in these cases than in the higher walks of political life, which are necessarily under better control. The illiterate peasants are quite defenceless, and should some educated man try to interfere on their behalf he is sure to get into serious trouble, for sympathy with the peasants is always considered in high circles as identical with subversive ideas. Robbery goes on unchecked, hardly concealed by even the forms of decency.

It not infrequently happens that the money paid for taxes is embezzled, the peasant in this case being compelled to pay a second time. The sums sent by the *zemstvos* for the relief of the hungry are embezzled; the funds advanced for the purchase of seed corn are seized; the very corn which is stored in communal granaries as a provision for times of scarcity is stolen. Each year brings heaps of such cases to light. All that can be plundered is plundered.

On what ground, then, can we hope that "cheap credit" institutions would escape? We know by experience how these so-called "peasants' loans and savings banks" are managed, which for a time were the hobby of the *zemstvos* and of the liberal officials. They received a considerable development, their capital amounting in 1883 to thirteen million roubles—on paper, at least. To show what these banks were I need only quote from the *Novoe Vremya*, the organ of the high-class *koulaks*, which admitted that "in an enormous majority of instances the banks benefited the bulk of the peasants nothing whatever, having become instruments of usury in the hands of rural *koulaks* and swindlers." The managers, communal clerks, *koulaks*, parish

beadles, and other rural notabilities "borrowed money from the banks to re-lend at usurious interest to needy peasants." (No. 2532.)

Several revisions, undertaken on some occasions by the Governors-General in entire provinces, as for instance in those of the eight districts of Tchernigoff Province and the whole Penza province (1882), have shown that the money was principally "borrowed" by a few persons when the banks first started, some ten or twelve years ago, and has not yet been refunded. To use plain English, it was simply stolen. For formality's sake, a new book was bought every January, and the old debtors' names re-entered from year to year, as if the amounts standing to their debit had been only just advanced. Exactly the same trick was used by Rykoff, Youkhanzeff, and other high-class robbers who stole millions, a fact which only goes to prove yet once again that *les beaux esprits se rencontrent*.

Enough of this. From these cursory remarks the reader can well realize that the second of the great measures indispensable for extricating the peasants from the grasp of usury—cheap credit—would be a rather risky proceeding under the present political régime.

The third indispensable requirement for rendering the acquisition, by the people, of the material means of work, of any avail is the spread of both elementary and professional education among the rural classes. A large and wide diffusion of knowledge among them would increase tenfold the productiveness of labour, and open out an unlimited field for further progress in its social and economical life. But here, once more, we stumble against the autocracy, which cannot tolerate the idea of an educated peasantry, and which does not recoil from the most bare-faced obstructions and shameful subterfuges for hindering the diffusion of primary education, impeding the foundation of new schools, and blocking the wheels of the old ones.

To conclude. There is a means for extricating our people from the deadlock to which Russia has been brought ; but it implies as a *conditio sine qua non* the abolition of the bureaucratic despotism and the transformation of the autocratic Empire into a free constitutional State of the European type. Of all the series of measures which only in their totality would suffice to reduce to order the present economical, social, and political chaos, not one can be adopted by the existing régime.

Each implies or necessitates the breaking up of the present system. And every step that makes for the redemption of the masses involves danger to the supremacy of the Czar and his satellites.

Our Government, caring above all things for its own interests and privileges, and putting all else in the background, acts according to the dictates of the grossest selfishness. It did not object to reforms in favour of the peasants so long as the reforms could be effected at the expense of the serf-owning nobility. This was very wise and perspicacious, and for a time won the Emperor Alexander II. great popularity, even among extreme Radicals and Socialists. But from the moment when this was found insufficient, and a demand was made for the cessation of absolute power, the Government made up its mind and took the opposite course.

The whole home policy of the two last reigns since the Emancipation, is nothing but a constant fostering of the interests of the privileged classes at the expense of the masses. Hundreds of millions—milliards—of money exacted from the peasants are spent in “supporting the nobility” or the “landlords,” or in subsidizing great manufacturers. For the sake of augmenting the profits

of the favoured trades, prohibitive tariffs are levied, wars of conquest are undertaken, and conquered provinces cut off by cordons of custom-houses of the interior. And when, in 1871, the more enlightened and liberal part of the privileged classes—the *zemstvos* of all the thirty-four provinces where the *zemstvos* existed—unanimously condemned the injustice of the present fiscal system and petitioned for the introduction of a progressive income-tax, equitable for all, the Czar Alexander II. pronounced the measure to be too democratic and subversive—too likely to injure and alienate the *koulaks*, the usurers, the sharpers and the swindlers of every sort. In its selfish fear autocracy appeals to the worst instincts and the basest elements of human nature, for selfishness and greed is its best support.

Connivance is secured by dividing the booty, and attempts to improve the condition of the masses are regarded as acts of overt sedition. They are opposed by the combined forces of the censorship of the Press and the police. The people's friends are not even allowed to denounce the horrors which are passing under their eyes. The democratic monthlies, such as the *Annales*, the *Slovo*, and the *Dielo*, are suppressed under

the pretext that they are organs of "revolution" —a nonsensical accusation against periodicals that had been published for fifteen or eighteen years in the Czar's capital. Their real offence was that they made the investigation of the condition of our peasantry the chief object of their efforts, and continually held the light of truth and science over this abyss of popular suffering.

Whenever some fact or some rumour brings the agrarian question forcibly before the public, the press invariably receives secret orders, like those of June 12th, 1881, and June 26th, 1882, forbidding, "in order not to excite public opinion," the publication of anything referring to the sensational affair of Count Bobrinsky and Prince Scherbatoff, showing such an amount of cruelty, cheating, and malversation on the part of these gentlemen towards the peasantry as to be exceptional and revolting even for Russia. Or the orders are more sweeping, as on March 17th, 1882 :-—"It is absolutely forbidden to publish anything referring to the rumours going on among peasants as to the redistribution of land, as well as articles alleging the necessity or the justice of making any alteration in the agrarian condition of the peasants." Or on September

18th, 1885 :—"Forbidding absolutely the commemoration in any form of the coming (February 19th, 1886) twenty-fifth anniversary of the emancipation of the peasants," lest some allusion to their present evil plight might perchance escape the speakers.

This is our position. It is not the Imperial Government that materially or purposely ruins the peasants, which is equivalent to saying the nation; but the Government, out of regard for its mere selfish interests, purposely and deliberately supports and assists those who are ruining it, whilst, for the same reason, suppressing every influence and force likely to produce a different result. The Government of the two Alexanders is, therefore, fully and entirely responsible for the present sufferings of the Russian masses. This is the chief, the most terrible and overwhelming count in the indictment against our Government.

Great are the wrongs, bitter the abuses and sufferings inflicted by this despotism on the whole of educated Russia—arbitrary arrests, detentions, exiles without any trial whatever, the trampling down of all sacred human rights, suppression of freedom of speech and of the press, violation of

the hearth and prevention of the right to work, whereby the lives of thousands of intelligent, well-intentioned, and innocent men and women are either wasted or made miserable. But, what are their sufferings compared with those of the dumb millions of our peasantry? What an ocean of sorrow, tears, despair, and degradation is reflected in these dry figures, which prove that households have by hundreds of thousands been forced to sell by auction all their poor possessions; that millions of peasants who were at one time independent have been turned into *batraks*, driven from their homes, have had their families destroyed, their children sold into bondage, and their daughters given to prostitution; and untold numbers of full-grown, nay even gray-haired, respectable labourers, have been shamefully flogged to extort taxes. Then think on these frightful figures of mortality—sixty-two a year per thousand in thirteen provinces. This means nothing less than half a million a year virtually dying of hunger, starved to death in a twelve-month, with the probability that before long the proportion will be doubled.

Verily, it is here, and not so much in the cruelties inflicted on political offenders, that we

must look for the cause of the fierce, implacable hatred of the revolutionists against their Government.

Herein lies the peremptory cause, the permanent stimulant and the highest justification of the Russian revolution and of Russian conspiracies. Life is not worth living when your eyes constantly behold such miseries as these inflicted on a people whom you love. It would be a shame to bear the name of a Russian had these unutterable sufferings of the masses called forth no responsive and boundless devotion to the people's cause ; a devotion which glows in the hearts of all those thousands of Russia's sons and daughters who risk life, freedom, domestic happiness, all which is most dear to our common nature, in the effort to free their country from a Government which is the mainspring of all these woes.

But, we are sometimes told, the Nihilists have no right to set themselves up as champions of the peasants against the autocracy, for the rural masses are loyal and devoted to the Czar.

If to label aspirations which, in their very essence, are hostile to the Czardom with the name of the Czar can in truth be called loyalty, why then a vast majority of our peasants are most

assuredly very loyal indeed. In this case, however, it is strange that the Imperial Government and the Czar himself place so little trust in this loyalty as to tremble at the thought of putting it to the test. The prospect of perpetual Nihilist attempts, which make the present life of the Gatschina prisoner a burden and the future a terror, seem to the Government preferable to the chances of a popular vote. For have not the Nihilists repeatedly declared that they would desist from hostilities towards their paternal government from the first moment that it obtained the sanction of the freely expressed voice of the people?

The fact is that the peasants are as dissatisfied with the working of the present institutions as the Nihilists themselves—certainly more dissatisfied than are the educated and privileged classes as a whole. And the reader will certainly admit that for this discontent they have ample cause. The only difference between the middle-class opposition and the peasantry is, that the peasantry think the autocracy has no share whatever in bringing on them the calamities from which they suffer, and that the Czar is as much dissatisfied as the peasants themselves with the present order of

things, which they attribute to the wickedness and cunning of the "nobility." It is doubtful whether the peasants will stick for ever, or for long, to this nonsensical idea. But I frankly confess that, even as matters now stand, I take a totally different view as to this would-be sanction. I think that if there be anything which deprives our Government of all claim to respect; if there be anything which can lower it in the eyes of mankind, and which will remain as a stain on its escutcheon for evermore, it is just the foul perfidy involved in the abuse of this touching, child-like confidence reposed in it by the simple-hearted millions of our Russian peasantry

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***THE MOUJIKS AND THE RUSSIAN
DEMOCRACY.***

CHAPTER I.

WHEN, about a score of years before the Emancipation, the Russian democrats for the first time came into close contact with the peasants, with the view of becoming better acquainted with their down-trodden brothers, they were amazed at their discoveries. The *monjiks* proved to be an entirely different race from what pitying people amongst their "elder brothers" expected them to be.

Far from being degraded and brutalised by slavery, the peasants, united in their semi-patriarchal, semi-republican village communes, exhibited a great share of self-respect, and even capacity to stand boldly by their rights, where the whole of the commune was concerned. Diffident in their dealings with strangers, they showed a remarkable truthfulness and frankness in their dealings among themselves, and a sense of duty and loyalty and unselfish devotion to their little communes, which contrasted strikingly

with the shameful corruption and depravity of the official classes.

They had not the slightest notion of the progress made by the sciences, and believed that the earth rested on three whales, swimming on the Ocean; but in their traditional morality they sometimes showed such deep humanity and wisdom as to strike their educated observers with wonder and admiration.

These pioneer democrats, men of great talent and enormous erudition, such as Yakushkin, Dal, and Kireevsky, in propagating among the bulk of the reading public the results of their long years of study, laid the base of that democratic feeling which has never since died out in Russia.

From that time forth the momentous rush of the educated people "amongst the peasants," and the study of the various sides of peasant life, has been constantly on the increase. No country possesses such a literature on the subject as Russia; but the tone of the writers of these latter times—men of the same stamp as Yakushkin and Kireevsky—is no longer that of unmixed admiration. Whether you embark on the sea of statistical and ethnographical lore collected for posterity by the untiring zeal of the

late Orloff and his followers, or whether you are lost in admiration of the artistic sketches of peasant life drawn by Uspensky, or whether you are perusing the works of no less trustworthy though less gifted essayists of the same school, such as Zlatovratsky and Zassodimsky, you will invariably be brought to recognise a great breaking up of the traditional groundwork of the social and moral life of our peasantry.

Something harsh, cruel, cynically egotistical, is worming itself into the hearts of the Russian agricultural population, where formerly all was simplicity, peace, and goodwill unto men. Thus the grey-bearded grandfathers are not alone in modern Russia in lamenting the good old times. Some of our young and popular writers are, strangely enough, striking the same wailing chords. It is evident that in the terrible straits through which our people are passing, not only their material condition but their very souls have suffered grave injuries.

Yet it is not all lamentation about the past in the tidings which reach us from our villages. The good produced by the progress of culture is, in spite of its drawbacks, according to our modest opinion, full compensation for the impairing

of the almost unconscious virtues of the old patriarchal period.

Freed from the yoke of serfdom, and put before the tribunals on an equal footing with other citizens, their former masters included, the peasants, too, are beginning to feel themselves to be citizens. A new generation, which has not known slavery, has had time to grow up. Their aspiration after independence has not as yet directed itself against political despotism, save in isolated cases; but in the meantime it has almost triumphed in the struggle against the more intimate and trying domestic despotism of the *bolshak*, the head of the household. A very important and thoroughgoing change has taken place in the family relations of the great Russian rural population. The children, as soon as they are grown up and have married, will no longer submit to the *bolshak's* whimsical rule. They rebel, and if imposed upon, separate and found new households, where they become masters of their own actions. These separations have grown so frequent that the number of independent households in the period from 1858-1881 increased from thirty-two per cent. to seventy-one per cent. of the whole provincial population.

It is worthy of remark that the rebellion among the educated classes also first began in the circle of domestic life, before stepping into the larger arena of political action.

Elementary education, however hampered and obstructed by the Government, is spreading among the rural classes. In 1868, of a hundred recruits of peasant origin there were only eight who could read and write. In 1882 the proportion of literate people among the same number was twenty. This is little compared with what might have been done, but it is a great success if we remember the hindrances the peasant has had to overcome.

Reading, which a score of years ago was confined exclusively to the upper classes, is now spreading among the *moujiks*. Popular literature of all kinds has received an unprecedented development in the last ten or fifteen years. Popular books run through dozens of editions, and are selling by scores of thousands of copies.

Religion is the language in which the human spirit lisps its first conceptions of right and gives vent to its first aspirations. The awakening of the popular intelligence and moral consciousness has found its expression in dozens of new religi-

ous sects, a remarkable and suggestive phenomenon of modern popular life in Russia. Differing entirely from the old ritualistic sectarianism, which was more of a rebellion against ecclesiastical arrangements than against orthodoxy, these new sects of rationalistic and Protestant type have acquired in about ten or twelve years hundreds of thousands, nay millions, of proselytes.

This movement of thought, both by its exaltation and the general tendency of its doctrines, can be compared with the great Protestant movement of the sixteenth century. The only difference consists in its being confined in Russia exclusively to the rural and working classes, without being in the least shared by the educated people. The sources of religious enthusiasm are dried up, we think for ever, in the Russian intellectual classes, their enthusiasm and exaltation having found quite another vent. For nobody can seriously consider the few drawing-room attempts to found some new creed, of which we have now and then heard of late. But it is beyond doubt that the genuine and earnest development of religious thoughts and feelings, which we are witnessing among our masses, will play an important part in our people's near future.

In whatever direction we look, everything proves that under the apparent calm there is a great movement in the minds of our rural population. The great social and political crisis, through which Russia is passing, is not confined to the upper classes alone. The process of demolition, slower but vaster, is going on among the masses too. There all is tottering to its fall—orthodoxy, custom, traditional forms of life. The European public only takes notice of the upper stratum of the crisis, of that which is going on among the educated, because of its dramatic manifestations; but the crisis among our agricultural classes, wrought by the combined efforts of civilisation on the one hand and of economical ruin on the other, is no less real, and certainly no less interesting and worthy of study than the former.

In what does this crisis consist? How far and in what direction have the changes in the social and ethical ideals, the traditional morality and the character of the *moujik*, the tiller and guardian of our native land, gone? It would seem presumption to answer, or even to attempt to answer, in the space of a few pages such questions in reference to an enormous rural population like the Russian. I hasten, therefore, to mention one

thing which renders such an attempt—partial at least—justifiable.

A Russian *moujik* presents of course as many varieties as there are tribes and regions in the vast empire. There is a wide difference between the peculiarly sociable, open-hearted Great Russian peasant, brisk in mind and speech, quick to love and quick to forget, and the dreamy and reserved Ruthenian; or between the practical, extremely versatile and independent Siberian, who never knew slavery, and the timid Beloruss (White Russian), who has borne three yokes. But through all the varieties of types, tribes, and past history, the millions of our rural population present a remarkable uniformity in those higher general, ethical, and social conceptions which the educated draw from divers social and political sciences, and the uneducated from their traditions, which are the depositories of the collective wisdom of past generations.

This seemingly strange uniformity in our peasants' moral physiognomy is to be accounted for by two causes: the perfect identity of our people's daily occupation, which is almost exclusively pure husbandry, and the great similitude of those peculiar self-governing associations,

village communes, in which the whole of our rural population, without distinction of tribe or place, have lived from time immemorial.

No occupation is fitter to develop a morally as well as physically healthy race than husbandry. We mean genuine husbandry, where the tiller of the soil is at the same time its owner. We need not dwell on the proofs. Poets, historians, and philosophers alike have done their best to bring home to us, corrupted children of the towns, the charms of the simple virtues which hold sway amidst the populations of staunch ploughmen.

In Russia, until the "economic progress" of the last twenty-five years turned twenty millions of our peasants into landless proletarians, they were all landowners. Even the scourge of serfdom could not depose them from that dignity. The serfs, who gratuitously tilled the manorial land, had each of them pieces of freehold land which they cultivated on their own account. Nominally it was the property of the landlords. But so strong was tradition and custom that the landlords themselves had almost forgotten that they had a right to it. So much was this the case that Professor Engelhardt ("Letters from a Village"), tells us that many of the former

seigneurs only learned from the Act of Emancipation of 1861 that the land on which the peasants dwelt also belonged to them.

Gleb Uspensky, in discussing the causes of the wonderful preservation of the purity of the moral character of the Russian people through such a terrible ordeal as three centuries of slavery, which passed over without ingrafting into it any of the vice of slavery, can find no other explanation than this: the peasant was never separated from the ploughshare, from the all-absorbing cares and the poetry of agricultural work.

Our peasants could, however, do something more than preserve their individuality. They could give a more lasting proof and testimony as to their collective dispositions and aspirations. A Russian village has never been a mere aggregation of individuals, but a very intimate association, having much work and life in common. These associations are called *mirs* among the Great and White Russians, *hromadas* among the Ruthenians.

Up to the present time the law has allowed them a considerable amount of self-government. They are free to manage all their economical con-

cerns in common: the land, if they hold it as common property—which is the case everywhere save in the Ruthenian provinces—the forests, the fisheries, the renting of public-houses standing on their territory, etc. They distribute among themselves as they choose, the taxes falling to the share of the commune according to the Government schedules. They elect the rural executive administration—*Starost* and *Starshinas*—who are (nominally at least) under their permanent control.

Another very important privilege which they possess is that they, the village communes composing the *Volost*, in general meeting assembled, elect the ten judges of the *Volost*. All these must be peasants, members of some village commune. The jurisdiction of the peasants' tribunal is very extensive; all the civil, and a good many criminal offences (save the capital ones), in which one of the parties, at least, is a peasant of the district, are amenable to it. The peasants sitting as judges are not bound to abide in their verdicts by the official code of law. They administer justice according to the customary laws and traditions of the local peasantry.

The records of these tribunals, published by an official commission, at once afford us an insight

into the peasants' original notions as to juridical questions. We pass over the verdicts illustrating the popular idea as to land tenure, which has been expounded above. We will rather try to elicit the other side of the question: the peasants' views on movable property, the right of bequest, of inheritance, and their civil code in general, which presents some curious and unexpected peculiarities.

The fact which strikes us most in it is, that among the peasants where the patriarchal principle is as yet so strong and the ties of blood are held so sacred, kinship gives no right to property. The only rightful claim to it is given by work. Whenever the two interests clash, it is to the right of labour that the popular conscience gives the preference. The father cannot disinherit one son or diminish his share for the benefit of his favourite. Notwithstanding the religious respect in which the last will of a dying man is held, both the *mir* and the tribunal will annul it at the complaint of the wronged man, if the latter is known to be a good and diligent worker. The fathers themselves know this well. Whenever they attempt to prejudice one of their children in their wills they always adduce as motive that he has been a sluggard or a spendthrift and has

already dissipated his share. The favourite, on the other hand, is mentioned as "having worked hard for the family."

Kinship has no influence whatever in the distribution and proportioning of shares at any division of property. It is determined by the quantity of work each has given to the family. The brother who has lived and worked with the family for the longer time will receive most, no matter whether he be the elder or the younger. He will be excluded from the inheritance altogether if he has been living somewhere else and has not contributed in some way to the common expenses. The same principle is observed in settling the differences between the other grades of kinsfolk. The cases of sons-in-law, step-sons, and adopted children are very characteristic. If they have remained a sufficient time—ten or more years—with the family, they receive, though strangers, all the rights of legitimate children, whilst the legitimate son is excluded if he have not taken part in the common work.

This is in flagrant contradiction to the civil code of Russia, as well as of other European countries. The same contradiction is observable in the question of women's rights. The Russian

law entitles women—legitimate wives and daughters—to *one-fourteenth* only of the family inheritance. The peasants' customary law requires no such limitation. The women are in all respects dealt with on an equal footing with the men. They share in the property in proportion to their share in the work. Sisters, as a rule, do not inherit from brothers, because in marrying they go to another family, and take with them as dowry the reward of their domestic work. But a spinster sister, or a widow who returns to live with her brothers, will always receive or obtain from the tribunal her share.

The right to inheritance being founded on work alone, no distinction is made by the peasants' customary law between legitimate wives and concubines.

It is interesting to note that the husband, too, inherits the wife's property (if she has brought him any) only when they have lived together sufficiently long—above ten years; otherwise the deceased wife's property is returned to her parents.

The principle ruling the order of inheritance is evidently the basis for the verdicts in all sorts of litigation. Labour is always recognized as giving an indefeasible right to property. Accord-

ing to common jurisprudence, if one man has sown a field belonging to another—especially if he has done it knowingly—the court of justice will unhesitatingly deny the offender any right to the eventual product. Our peasants are as strict in their observance of boundaries, when once traced, as are any other agricultural folk. But labour has its imprescriptible rights. The customary law prescribes a remuneration for the work executed *in both* of the above mentioned cases—in the case of unintentional as well as in the case of premeditated violation of property. Only, in the first instance, the offender, who retains all the product, is simply compelled to pay to the owner the rent of the piece of land he has sown, according to current prices, with some trifling additional present; whilst in the case of violation knowingly done, the product is left to the owner of the land, who is bound, nevertheless, to return to the offender the seed, and to pay him a labourer's wages for the work he has done.

If a peasant has cut wood in a forest belonging to another peasant, the tribunal settles the matter in a similar way. In all these cases the common law would have been wholly against the offender, the abstract right of property reigning supreme.

In the vast practice of the many thousands of peasants' tribunals, there are certainly instances of verdicts being given on other principles than these, or contrary to any principle whatever. Remembering the very numerous influences to which a modern village is subjected in these critical times, it would have been surprising were it otherwise. Moreover, the peasants' tribunal has by its side the *pisar*, the communal clerk, a stranger to the village and its customs. This important person is the champion and propagator of official views and of the official code. His influence on the decisions of the peasants' courts is considerable, as is well known. The rarity of the exceptions, however, makes the rule the more salient.

The peasants have applied their collective intelligence not to material questions alone, nor within the domain apportioned to them by law. The *mir* recognises no restraint on its autonomy. In the opinion of the peasants themselves, the *mir's* authority embraces, indeed, all domains and branches of peasant life. Unless the police and the local officers are at hand to prevent what is considered an abuse of power, the peasants' *mir* is always likely to exceed its authority.

Here is a curious illustration. In the autumn of 1884, according to the *Russian Courier* of the 12th November, 1884, a peasants' *mir* in the district of Radomys^{sk} had to pronounce upon the following delicate petition: One of their fellow-villagers, Theodor P., whose wife had run away from him several years before, and who was living as housemaid in some private house, wanted to marry another woman, from a neighbouring village. He accordingly asked the *mir* to accept his bride as a female member of their commune. Having heard and discussed this original demand, the *mir* unanimously passed the following resolution: "Taking into consideration that the peasant Theodor P., living for several years without his legitimate wife by the fault of the latter, is now in great need of a woman (!), his marriage with the former wife is dissolved. In accordance with which, after being thrice questioned by the elder (mayor) of our village as to whether we will permit Theodor P. to receive into his house as wife the peasant woman N——, we give our full consent thereto. And if, moreover, Theodor P. shall have children by his second wife, we will recognise them as legitimate and as heirs to their father's

property, the 'freehold and the communal land included."

This resolution, duly put on paper and signed by all the householders and by the elder of the village, was delivered as certificate of marriage to the happy couple, no one suspecting that the *mir* had overstepped its power.

In the olden times, as late as the sixteenth century, it was the *mir* who elected the parson (as the dissenting villages are doing nowadays), the bishops only imposing hands on the *mir's* nominees. The orthodox peasants have quite forgotten this historical right of theirs; but the natural right of the *mir* allows it to deal even with subjects referring to religion.

The conversion to dissenting creeds of whole villages in a lump, is of very common occurrence in the history of modern sects. A dissenting preacher comes to a village and makes a few converts. For a time they zealously "preach their doctrines to their fellow-villagers. Then, when they consider the harvest ripe, they bring the matter before the *mir*, and often that assembly, after discussing the question, passes a resolution in favour of the acceptance of the

new creed. The whole village turns "shalopyt" or "evangelical," changing creeds as small states did in the times of the Reformation.

To a Russian peasant it seems the most natural thing in the world that the *mir* should do this whenever it chooses. In my wanderings among the peasants, I remember having met near Riazan with a peasant who amused me much by telling how they succeeded in putting a check on the cupidity and extortion of the *pop* of their village. "When we could no longer bear it we assembled and said to him, 'Take care, *batka* (father); if you won't be reasonable, we, all the *mir*, will give up orthodoxy altogether, and will elect a *pop* from among ourselves.'"¹ And the *pop* then became "tender as silk," for he knew his flock would not hesitate to put their threat into effect.

The *mir* forms indeed a *microcosm*, a small world of its own. The people living in it have to exercise their judgment on everything, on the moral side of man's life as on the material, shaping it so as to afford to their small communities as much peace and happiness as is possible under their very arduous circumstances.

Have these uneducated people been able to achieve anything in the high domain of public morality?

Yes, they have, though what they have done cannot be registered in volumes like the verdicts of their tribunals. They have maintained through centuries, and improved, the old Russian principle of governing without oppression. To settle all public questions by unanimous vote, never by mere majority, is a wise rule, for a body of people living on such close terms. This system, however, could only be rendered practicable, amongst people of all sorts of tempers and diverse moral qualities, by a high development of the sentiments of justice, equanimity, and conciliation.

Our peasants lay no claim to being a race of Arcadian pastors. Their present and their past alike has been and still is too hard to make it possible for them ever to forget that charity begins at home. In the bitter struggle for a bare existence which they have had to sustain, each has had to consider his own skin first. In their every day life and intercourse they are as egotistical as any other set of people, each man trying to make the best of his opportunities.

"Each for himself," say they,—“but God and the *mir* for all.” The *mir* is no egotist; it pities everybody alike, and should it have to settle any difference it does not look to the numerical strength or respective influence of the contending parties, but to the absolute justice of the cause.

But is not the *mir* composed of the selfsame individuals who outside of its charmed circle are pursuing each his personal ends and interests? If they are able to forget themselves when at the *mir*, and can elevate their minds and hearts to the exercise of perfect justice and impartiality, they must also be equal to doing the same outside of the *mir*, in those solemn moments when daily cares and anxieties are cast on one side and their higher nature has free play. The *mir's* morality gives its tone to, and shapes according to its image, the morality of the individual too.

Hence that wide tolerance which characterises our peasants; that somewhat gregarious benevolence embracing all men, almost to the prejudice of intensity of personal attachment, but which excludes nobody from its pale. The Russian *moujik* is proverbially benevolent towards strangers

of his own race. He is accustomed to feel something like family attachment to most, or to very many, of the members of his *mir*. It is easy for him to admit a new member into so large a family. When difference of religion and of language do not allow of the full benefit of adoption—he will still recognise in the stranger a man like himself.

There is no people on the face of the earth who treat aliens so kindly as do the Russian *moujiks*. They live peacefully side by side with hundreds of tribes, differing in race and religion—Tartars, Circassians, Bouriats, and German colonists. (The outburst against the Jews sprang from economical causes, and not from racial antipathy.) During the last Turkish war, whilst the burghers and the shop-boys of the towns were casting stones and mud at the poor Turkish prisoners of war, as they passed along the streets, until the police had to intervene, the *moujiks* offered them bread and coppers, and in some cases even took them home to their villages as paid labourers. They were greatly perplexed, it is true, as to whether they could invite them to share their meals, being “infidels,” but they generally ended by conquering their prejudices;

and they, the representatives of two belligerent nations, might be seen amicably eating at the same table (Zlatovratsey).

The *mir* in the management of its affairs recognises no permanent laws restricting or guiding its decisions. It is the personification of the living law, speaking through the collective voice of the commune. Every case brought before the *mir* is judged on its own merits, according to the endless variety of its peculiar circumstances. In foreign lands, too, the laws tacitly acknowledge the necessity for making a considerable allowance for the voice of pure conscience in the more delicate questions of society—as to the culpability or innocence of its members. But by the side of the jury sits the judge, the representative of the written law, one of whose duties it is to control and keep them within their strictly defined limits—i.e., to the mere verdict as to the facts of the case. With a Russian *mir* the law is nowhere, the “conscience” everywhere. Not merely the fact of the criminal offence, but every disputed point is settled according to the individual justice of the case, no regard being paid to the category of crime to which it may chance to belong.

These villagers have to deal with living men whom they know and love, and it is, deeply repugnant to them to overshoot the mark by so much as a hair's breadth for the sake of a dead abstraction—the law.

This bent of mind is not confined to the peasantry,—it is national.

I have frequently observed, and I believe that all who have given any attention to the subject will agree with me, that the abstract idea of "law," as a something which is to be obeyed to the letter under all circumstances, even when the peculiar circumstances of a case make it unjust, is grasped with the greatest difficulty, even by the most cultured Russians.

There are few among our countrymen who will not give the preference to the dictates of conscience tempered by a fair and impartial mind. They are in this respect a perfect contrast to the people of English origin. In our great poet Pushkin this feeling was so strong as to make him an upholder of the principle of absolute monarchy. "Why," he said, "is it necessary that one of us should be put above all the rest, and even above the laws? Because the law is a wooden thing. In the law the man feels something hard,

unbrotherly. With a literal application of the law you cannot do much. But at the same time nobody may take upon himself to transgress or disregard the law. Hence it is necessary that there should be a supreme clemency to temper the laws, and this can only be embodied in the autocratic monarch."

Out of respect to the memory of our great national teacher of art, I will not here discuss the antiquated conception of a monarch as a dispenser of justice, and not as an administrator, bound to know all, to see all, to understand all, under penalty of being befooled and made a tool of at every turn. I simply mention it as a good illustration of the peculiar bent of the Russian mind.

Much of this is to be ascribed to the lack of political education, and to the feeble development of the proud and powerful sense of individuality which is the one quality we most envy our Western neighbours. To a truly independent man even a hard law, because abstract and dispassionate, and known to him beforehand, is a better thing than the most benignant despotism. That which is the most abhorrent to him is the sense that he is dependent on the good pleasure of another—be it the benevolent despotism of

one master, or even the still more benevolent despotism of a friendly crowd.

Nevertheless we must not forget that on the other hand we have been spared the habit of not looking or caring to look beyond the mere legal aspect and established rule as to human conduct.

In constantly striving after individual justice, both in practice, as with the peasants, and in theory, as with the educated classes, our people have not been able to rest satisfied with mere appearances, nor to consider the question solved as soon as they discovered under which section of the criminal or any other code the trespass fell. They have had to look into the very innermost recesses of the human heart, to discover all its hidden promptings, and to subject them to an impartial, dispassionate examination, all which must needs have educated our people in a spirit of the highest tolerance. "To understand everything is to forgive everything," is the deepest of human sayings.

Hence that "pity for all" which extends, not merely to the weak, but to the fallen, to the degraded, to the outcast. Just observe how our *moujiks* behave towards criminals. All, without distinction, are designated under the generic term

of "unhappy," and are treated as such. No contempt, no harshness can be detected in the demeanour of the crowd of peasants, who meet (bearing alms in their hands) a body of convicts being escorted to Siberia. They know that many of them must be innocent of any real offence. But there is something deeper than this in their humanity. Gogol, who excelled all other writers in the insight he possessed as to the workings of the Russian mind, observes that "of all nations the Russian alone is convinced that there exists no man who is absolutely guilty, as there exists no man who is absolutely innocent." Is it not this same idea which permeates Dostoievsky's masterpiece, "Buried Alive"? Is not this "pity for all" apparent throughout the works of all our great masters, from Gogol to Gonciaroff and Ostrovsky? Herein lies yet one more proof that in the moral qualities of the two extreme sections of the Russian nation—the peasantry, who are at the bottom of the social scale, and the educated, who are at the top—there are some striking resemblances which cannot be purely accidental.

Many foreign writers have been struck by the peculiar ardour which animates the Russians of all classes in their devotion to their country.

Well, I do not know whether this is due to the emotional character of our people, or whether it is merely a reflection of what is intensely developed under another name, within our masses. Among the peasantry, in whose eyes their *mir* is their country, the devotion of each individual to the *mir* has been made the keynote of social morality. They have learned to exercise self-restraint in petty everyday concessions and services to the *mir*, and have risen to the sublimity of heroism in their acts of self-sacrifice for its good. Examples of this are frequent. To "suffer for the *mir*;" to be put in chains and to be thrown into prison as the *mir's khodok* or messenger,—“sent to the Czar” with the *mir's* grievances; to be beaten, exiled to Siberia or to the mines, for having stood up boldly for the rights of the *mir* against some powerful oppressor,—such are the forms of heroism to which an enthusiastic peasant aspires, and which the people extol.

The orthodox Church has no hold over the souls of the masses. The *pop* or priest is but an official of the bureaucracy and depredator of the commune. But we hardly need to say that the high ethics of Christianity, the appeal to brotherly

love, to forgiveness, to self-sacrifice for the good of others, yet have always found an echo in the responsive chords of our people's hearts. "The type of a saint, as conceived by our peasants," says Uspensky, "is not that of an anchorite, timidly secluded from the world, lest some part of the treasure he is accumulating in heaven might get damaged. Our popular saint is a man of the *mir*, a man of practical piety, a teacher and benefactor of the people." In Athanasieff's collection of popular legends we find an illustration of this idea. Two saints—St. Cassian and St. Nicolas—have come before the face of the Lord.

"What hast thou seen on the earth?" asks the Lord of St. Cassian, who first approached. "I have seen a *moujik* foundering with his car in a marsh by the wayside."

"Why hast thou not helped him?" "Because I was coming into Thy presence, and was afraid of spoiling my bright clothes."

The turn of St. Nicolas comes, who approaches with his dress all besmeared.

"Why comest thou so dirty into my presence?" asks the Lord. "Because I was following St. Cassian, and, seeing the *moujik* of whom he just spoke, I have helped him out of the marsh."

"Well," said the Lord, "because thou, Cassian, hast cared so much about thy dress and so little about thy brother, I will give thee thy saint's day only once in four years. And to thee, Nicolas, for having acted as thou didst, I will give four saint's days each year."

That is why St. Cassian's Day falls on the 29th of February, in leap year, and St. Nicolas has a saint's day each quarter.

Such is the peasant's interpretation of Christian morality. And is it not suggestive that the greatest novelist of our time, and a man of such vast intelligence as Count Leo Tolstoi, in making his attempt to found a purely ethical religion, formulates his views by referring the educated classes to the gospel *as it is understood by the moujik*?

Since I do not in the least presume to sketch anything like a full picture of our people's moral physiognomy, I shall stop here. My sole object has been to show that our peasantry, on the whole, as it has entered into political life and freedom after centuries of internal growth, presents a race with highly developed social instincts and many elements promising further progress; and that the feelings of deep respect, sometimes of enthusiastic

admiration, which the Russian democrats feel for the peasantry, are not devoid of foundation.

These feelings may often have been exaggerated, especially of old, when the two classes for the first time came into close contact. But excess of idealisation and sentimentality have become matters of history. They were destroyed by the rough touch of reality ; and the mighty figure of the hero of the plough has lost nothing by being stripped of tinsel. Hewn in unpolished stone, he looks better than when robed in marble. The charm of his strength, dauntless courage, and his moral character is strengthened by the thrilling voice of pity for the overwhelming, the indescribable sufferings of this childlike giant. A passion for Equality and Fraternity is and will ever be the strongest, we may say the only strong social feeling in Russia. It is by no means the privilege of "Nihilists," or advanced parties of any kind ; it is shared by the enormous majority of our educated classes.

Man is a sociable being. He yearns to attach himself to something vaster than a family, having a longer existence than his immediate surroundings. The feeling in which this yearning finds its commonest and easiest expression is

patriotism, embracing the whole of the nation, the State and the people being blended into one. For, us Russians, no such blending is possible. The crimes, the cruelties, equalled only by the folly, of those who are representing Russia as a State, stand there to prevent it.

No, no true Russian can ever wish Godspeed to the Government of his country. And yet we Russians are most ardent patriots. We have no attachment to our birthplace or any particular locality. But we love our people, our race, as intensely and organically as the Jews. And we are almost as incapable of getting thoroughly acclimatised in any other nation. In describing Russia's real and not fictitious glories, in speaking when in an expansive mood about his country's probable future and the service she is likely to render to mankind, a Russian can startle a *Chauviniste* of the *grande nation*. Yes, we are certainly patriotic. Only our patriotism runs entirely towards the realisation of the democratic ideal. The idea of country is embodied for us not in our State but in our people, in the *moujiks* and in those various elements which make the *moujiks'* cause our own. Our hopes, our devotion, our love, and that irresistible

idealism which stimulates to great labour, all that constitutes the essence of patriotism, with us is democratic.

In the following chapters I will relate how our popular notions of morality and justice bore the test of adversity ; what was the form assumed in villages by the corrosive elements, and how the people defended their traditional ideals of life.

We will begin by briefly sketching the tendencies of the purely political elements newly introduced into Russian village life, as they are more circumscribed in their action, and far less widespread than the economical.

PATERNAL GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER I.

As soon as the government had earnestly set its mind on the emancipation of the serfs, the all-important questions had to be faced, as to how all these millions of newly-made citizens should be managed and kept in order; and how they should be made to pay the price of their redemption to the lords of the manors, and the taxes to the State? The bureaucratic commission appointed for the settlement of this great problem of the Emancipation, with usual bureaucratic foresight and profundity, at first proposed that to the former *seigneurs* should be entrusted the administration, the justice, and the police of the rural districts.

This would have been neither more nor less than a re-instatement, only in another form, of serfdom—a joke made all the more dangerous in that there was but too much reason to anticipate bitter disappointments on the part of the people on many other points connected with their libera-

tion. Fortunately for itself, the Government listened to wiser counsel, offered by local committees, and the press, which pointed to the village communes as to natural and long-established institutions standing ready to their hand and existing throughout the country. The village commune was preserved. The open-air meetings of all the peasants, the *mir*, were acknowledged as the chief authority both in the village commune and in the rural *volost* or district, an administrative unit embracing a few village communes.

But here most puzzling questions of detail presented themselves to the minds of the St. Petersburg legislators. Notwithstanding the benevolent regard for the peasants which prevailed at this epoch in the highest governmental circles, our lawgivers could not admit that the *mir* might be left just as they found it. It was more than the most refined bureaucratic mind could digest—the *mir* and the *tchin*! It was as though two cultures, two different worlds, we may almost say two different types of human nature, as strongly individualized as they were antipathetic, had suddenly been brought face to face.

What is a *tchinovnik*? It is a man convinced that were it not for his "prescriptions," "instruc-

tions," and "enjoinments" the world would go all askew, and the people would suddenly begin to drink ink instead of water, to put their breeches on their heads instead of on their legs, and to commit all sorts of other incongruities. As all his life is passed from his most tender youth upward in offices, amidst heaps of scribbled papers, in complete isolation from any touch with real life, the *tchinovnik* understands nothing, has faith in nothing but these papers. He is as desperately sceptical as regards human nature as a monk, and does not trust one atom to men's virtue, honesty, or truthfulness. There is nothing in the world which can be relied upon but scribbled papers, and he is their votary.

Such an institution as the *mir*—a self-governing body with no trace of hierarchy or distinction of ranks, wielding an authority so extensive that in its own sphere of action it might be called unlimited, and at the same time wishing for no record of its proceedings, confiding in people's good faith and the infallible guidance of such a thing as collective conscience and wisdom—such an institution as the *mir*, to the mind of a *tchinovnik*, must have appeared incoherent, incomprehensible, almost contrary to the laws of

nature. It was his most sacred duty to bring order into this chaos.

Every Russian village commune elects its elder or mayor, who is by virtue of his office its spokesman and delegate before the authorities. In the village itself the elder is neither the chief nor even the *primus inter pares*, but simply the trusted servant and executor of the orders of the *mir*. The *mir* discusses and regulates everything that falls within its narrow and simple sphere of action, leaving hardly anything to the discrimination and judgment of its agent. So simple and subordinate are the elder's duties, that any peasant, provided he be neither a drunkard nor a thief, is eligible for the post. In many villages, in order to avoid discussion, the office of elder is filled in turn by all the members of the *mir*. As the eldership brings the peasant into frequent, almost daily, contact with the administration, which involves him in endless trouble and annoyance, peasants show very little ambition to fill the office. Much persuasion, sometimes remonstrance and abuse, are necessary before an honest peasant, who has not the feathering of his nest in view at the expense of the commune, can be induced to accept this post of honour.

Some writers—Mr. Mackenzie Wallace among them—in describing Russian village life, wonder at this strange lack of political ambition. I think it only too natural: our *moujiks* have not studied the history of Rome, Athens, and other republics, nor do they so much as suspect the existence of great municipalities such as London, Paris, or New York. No obsequious imagination suggests to them flattering analogies, and they cannot see that the proffered dignity is anything but a double servitude—to the *mir* on the one hand and to the administration on the other with no room whatever for the proud self-assertion which gives the charm of office to the gifted; a burden and a public work, differing from those of mending the roads, digging wells, or transporting Government freights only in so far that it is more trying and more troublesome.

Now, in modifying the system of rural self-government the St. Petersburg *tchinovniks* were inspired to transform this very modest and humble village elder into a diminutive *tchinovnik*, created in their own image and likeness. The task was not without its difficulties. The elder was as a rule deficient in the most essential qualification for his profession—he could not

write! It was therefore necessary that he should be provided with a secretary, who could inscribe the paper to which he should affix his seal or his cross. This important person, the clerk, was generally a perfect stranger to the village, a man picked up from the streets. As the law must needs give him extensive powers, it was all the more desirable that he should be easily controlled.

Our legislators proved equal to their task; for they blessed our villagers with a system of law-court proceedings which would do honour to much bigger places. To give some idea of their method, suffice it to say that the clerk of the *volost* is bound to supply his office with no less than sixty-five different registers, wherein to keep a record of the sixty-five various papers he has to issue daily, monthly, or quarterly. This was pushing their solicitude for the welfare of the countrymen rather too far, and taxing the clerk's powers rather too highly. In some of the larger *volosts* one man does not suffice for the task, and the peasants are compelled to maintain two, nay, even three clerks. It is needless to add that such a complication of legal business can in no way keep an adroit clerk in check nor prevent the abuse of his power. The opposite is rather the

case. The figure cut by the *pissar* or clerk in the annals of our new rural local government is a most unseemly one indeed. In its earlier period it was decidedly its blackest point.

The Government has undoubtedly had a hand in making the *pissar* such a disreputable character, by expressly prohibiting the engagement for this office of men of good education,—for fear of a revolution. All who have completed their studies at a gymnasium (college), much more those who have attended a high school, are precluded from filling this post. Only the more ignorant, those who have been expelled from college or who have never passed farther than through a primary school, have been trusted to approach the peasantry at such close quarters. Being generally self-seekers, and not particularly high-minded, they easily turned the peculiar position in which they were placed to their own advantage. The *pissar*, the interpreter of the law, and, more often than not, the only literate man in the district, could practically do whatever he chose. The elder, his nominal chief, in whom the word law inspired the same panic that it did in the breast of every other peasant, and who was quite bewildered by the bureaucratic complication of his

new administrative duties, was absolutely helpless in the *pissar's* hands.

The elders could, however, find ample compensation for this kind of involuntary dependence, in the consciousness of the power they wielded over the rest of the villagers. At the present day they are really chiefs and masters. To the elders of both grades was granted the right of imposing fines, to the extent of one rouble at a time; also the right to imprison or to impose compulsory labour, for a period not exceeding two days, on any member of their respective communes or *volost*. This "at their own discretion and without appeal," for any word, or act, or slight which they might consider derogatory to their dignity, such as omission to take off a hat before them, etc., of which there have been instances in recent times.

Neither with regard to the *mir* as a whole, may the elder's rights be lightly trifled with. In them is vested the exclusive right of convening meetings of the commune or the *volost*. A meeting assembled without their authorization is declared illegal, its resolutions void, and its conveners liable to severe penalties. By withdrawing from a meeting the elder can break it up when-

ever he considers that the debate is taking an unlawful turn. Thus the elder, though elected by popular vote, when once confirmed in his office becomes, for all practical purposes, the master of the body which elected him. A strange sort of local government certainly, though by no means an exceptional one under an autocracy. The local governments granted to our provinces in 1864, and to our towns in 1871, are modelled on exactly the same pattern. In both the chairman has more power than the body he presides over; an arrangement which has, as is well known, deprived both the provincial and the municipal governments of all vitality. •

It is interesting to observe that in the villages the same trick did not produce this same effect. There the legislation met with an ancient custom of collective communal life and local government which no *ukaz* could uproot. True that in the last twenty years great corruption had crept in, even in the case of village government. But this was due to the internal economical decomposition of the village commune, which divided the inhabitants into two camps, the one composed of a knot of rich people, and the other of a mass of proletarians and beggars. The law then became

a "ready-made" channel for the manifestations of the new anti-social elements, but not its direct cause.

So long as the process of the economical disintegration of the peasantry remains in an incipient state, as also in the thousands of communes which have until the present time preserved their original economical character, the bureaucratic prescriptions of the law remain a dead letter. The *mir* keeps to the traditional forms of local government. The elders, too, imbued with these traditions just as much as are their fellow-peasants, never think of making use of the strange powers reposed in them by the State. They remain in the subordinate and modest position formerly assigned to them—the "*mir's* men," to use our people's own expression.

It fared far worse with the other series of manipulations introduced into rural government, and which formed the natural supplement to those just dealt with.

Local village government had as yet to be linked in hierarchical order with the whole of the administrative machine of the State. After having created, in the midst of the once democratic villages, a sort of *tchin*, it was necessary to

discover another *tchin* to which to subject the newly-founded one.

The government, in the honeymoon of its liberalism, acted with sense and discretion in entrusting this function to the *mediators*, officers nominated conjointly by the ministry and by the election of the citizens. These *mediators*, elected from among the liberal and really well-intentioned part of the nobility, exercised their authority with moderation and wisdom, not so much as regarded subjection to the control of the *mir*, which was perfectly equal to its task, but to protect it from the abuses and malversations of the local police and its *pissars*.

Since 1863, the year of the Polish Insurrection, which marks the point at which our Government adopted a policy of reaction, the state of things has changed considerably. The Government then threw all the weight of its authority into the scale with the party of the "planters," as the obdurate advocates of serfdom were, in 1861, christened. The whole administration changed sides, and Russia has since seen *mediators* who have used their powers in order to compel the peasants to gratuitously do all sorts of work on their estates; who have publicly flogged the elders—mocking

at the law, which exempted them from corporal punishment, by first degrading them from their office, and then restoring to them the attributes of their dignity after they have been flogged.

The regular bondage of the *mir* began, however, a few years later. From 1868 down to 1874, when the office of the *mediators* was entirely suppressed, the *mir* gradually passed under the supreme command of the *ispravnik*, i.e., the superintendents of the local police.

The peasants' bitterest enemy could not have made a worse choice.

A police officer—we are speaking now of the common police, charged with the general maintenance of order and the putting down of common offenders—is a *tchin* in the administrative hierarchy like all the others. But between him and a paper-scribbling *tchin* of the innumerable Government offices, there is as wide a difference as between a decent, peaceful Chinese, votary of his ten thousand commandments, and a brutal and fierce Mogul of Jenghiz—though both have beardless faces and oblique eyes. A police *tchin* is our man of action. With him the instrument of command is not the pen, but the fist, the rod, and the stick. He breaks more teeth and flays

more backs than he issues papers. As regards other people's property, *tchins* of all denominations hold the same somewhat strange views. But whilst the scribbling *tchin* cheat and swindle, the police *tchin* ransack and extort like Oriental pachas.

In the villages, amongst the *moujiks*, who will suffer to the uttermost before "going to law," the police can afford to go to any extreme short of open homicide and arson. The function of tax collector alone, which, after the Emancipation, was entrusted to the police, offered a vast field for interference, abuse, and oppression, and of these the early *zemstvos* often complain. When the *ispravniks* were charged with the chief control of the rural administration, and could at their pleasure, and by way of disciplinary punishment, indict, fine, and imprison both the district and communal elders, self-government by the peasants, as such, was practically abolished. It could exist only as far and in so much as the police chose to tolerate it. "The *ispravniks*, thanks to the powers they have received, have transformed the elected officers of the rural government, the elders, into their submissive servants, who are more dependent on them than are even the

soldiers of the police-stations,"—that is the statement made by the most competent authorities on the subject, the members of the *zemstvos*. (*Russian Courier*, Nov. 8th, 1884.)

The village communes have become for the country police a permanent source of income, often levied in a way which reminds one forcibly of the good old days of serfdom. Thus, in the circular issued by the Minister of the Interior on March 29th, 1880, we find the significant confession that, "according to the reports accumulated in the offices of the ministry," the country police officers, profiting by their right to have *one* orderly to run their errands, were in the habit of taking from forty to fifty such orderlies from the communes under their command, *whom they used as their house and field labourers*. In some cases the communes, instead of this tribute of gratuitous labour, paid a regular tribute of money (called *obrok* by former serfs), amounting in some provinces, according to the same authority, to from forty thousand to sixty thousand roubles a year per province.

CHAPTER II.

THE *stanovois* and *ispravniks* are the menials of the provincial administration. Set over them are the Governors of the Provinces, with the Governors-General of regions containing several Provinces, both surrounded by a swarm of *tchinovniks*, attached to their persons, or grouped on "boards," "chambers," or "courts of justice" of various denominations. They do not come into direct contact with the *moujiks*, unless in exceptional cases, and by means of a few special officers.

In these higher grades of the administration, the chief means possessed by the servants of the public for enriching themselves at the expense of the peasantry assume a more refined form than that of petty bribery, and are at the same time far more profitable. They are the embezzlement of land.

I will pass over all the common everyday malversations of which the peasants are victims.

Those I will take as a matter of course ; but I will devote a few pages to describing this peculiar mode of plunder because it is practised on the largest scale by the whole of the Russian official world, from petty clerks up to the Governors, Governors-General, Ministers, and courtiers, both male and female.

The Provinces of those vast oriental regions bordered by the steppes of Central Asia have grown particularly famous of late, by reason of the extensive and bare-faced embezzlement of the land. The land there is plentiful ; the bulk of the population consists of alien tribes, who know next to nothing of Russian law or even of the Russian tongue, Russian being nevertheless the language in which all official documents are drawn up.

The *tchinovniks* are all-powerful here, and practically beyond control, so enormous are the distances from the Central Government. They can and they do profit by these opportunities, and permanently improve their private fortunes by robbing the people of the land, their sole valuable possession.

For the edification of those who indulge in singing pæans to Russia's mission of civilization to the barbaric tribes of Asia, it must be observed

that these services are not without their drawbacks. The Russian advance in these regions presents two markedly different stages. The first, which follows immediately upon the conquest or the peaceful annexation, shows the Russian rule in a most favourable light. Order is established, slavery and brigandage disappear, as do also the distinctions of race ; laws are made equal for all, and respect to them enforced with severity tempered by justice. The best men of the Empire, such as Count Perovsky, Mouravieff of the Amour, Tcherniaeff, Kaufmann, in all of whom ambition is stronger than cupidity, are sent to administer the newly-annexed territories. They generally defend the natives as far as they can even against Russian officials, and the hosts of adventurers and swindlers who follow in the rear of a conquering army.

During this period the Russian settlers are almost exclusively peasants, who are invited and encouraged to migrate into the newly-acquired country, in order to give Russia a stronger footing there. The Russian *moujiks* never fail to answer to such an appeal. The word "free land" produces a magic effect on them, and they constantly stream in all directions where such

treasure is to be found. Thousands of Russian villages have quite recently been founded on the Amour, on the enormous plains of Southern Siberia, among the Bashkirs, Khirghis, and Kalmuks of the Uffa, Orenburgh, and Samara Provinces, of which we shall shortly have to speak. Often the colonists precede the conquerors, penetrating into neighbouring countries scores of years before the armies. The annexation merely increases this movement. But in these parts land is plentiful—nobody suffers from the intrusion. The peasants take only so much land as they can till with their own hands, never appropriating one acre more. Furthermore, they rarely decline to enter into a friendly compromise with the natives.

Whilst the government of Siberia had to resort to the most drastic measures, such as the knout and hard labour, to prevent the nobility and rich merchants from converting the natives into slaves, the peasants of the Provinces of Astrakhan or Samara or Orenburg often paid a yearly tribute in money or in goods to the nomads whose lands they had appropriated. The rent in these districts is, however, so low, and the chances of receiving it so small, that neither the *tchinovnik* nor the

capitalists feel tempted to acquire estates. The husbandmen of both nationalities have thus plenty of land for tillage.

The position changes when the increase of population has considerably raised the value of land and diminished the amount to be disposed of. By this time the province has become solidly incorporated with the rest of the Empire, requiring neither particular ability nor care in its administration. The men of talent, ambition, and energy are attracted to other fields. Their posts are filled by commonplace *tchinovniks*, who start a new mode of "Russifying" and "benefiting" the country—by taking the land from both the natives and their own countrymen, the Russian colonists, with perfect impartiality.

This spoliation of land is going on everywhere, even in Siberia. For this we have the testimony of Yadrinzeff, who is our best authority on Siberian matters; though in this enormous desert, covered with ice and marshes and impenetrable brush-wood, the plunder is of necessity confined to those few districts more thickly populated than the rest. On the Siberian main, with its one inhabitant to every three square kilometers—two square miles (English)—the land is as yet free.

The peasantry know of neither rent nor communal property: each husbandman takes as much land as he can find and can cultivate. But in other colonies and regions more favoured by nature the robbery of land is perpetrated on a very large, sometimes gigantic scale, and is the chief speculation of the *tchinovniks*, their relatives, and their hangers-on, as well as of their St. Petersburg protectors.

Thus in the vast provinces of Uffa and Orenburg, which together cover an area equal to that of the United Kingdom—the officials with their numerous retinue have, in the period between 1873 to 1879, by force and fraud, embezzled no less than five million acres of the best arable land and timber wood of those districts.

The whole operation was carried out with all the appearance of legality, and was screened behind the plausible pretext of the “Russification” of the Provinces and “the improvement of their industries.” With this object in view the officials asked and obtained permission to sell the land “unoccupied by peasants of any race,” “on easy terms,” to officials “who have merited such favour by their faithful services to the State.”

As a matter of fact, only one item of that fable was true: the terms were the easiest imaginable, as excellent arable land, besides timber wood, which in these parts costs from fifty to one hundred roubles (a rouble is worth about two shillings) a dessiatine, were sold to the officials for merely nominal prices, varying from eight shillings down to tenpence a dessiatine, payable over long periods, varying from ten up to thirty-seven years. All the rest of the tale was an impudent falsehood and farce.

The land officially designated as free for occupation had generally been owned for generations, either by native *Bashkir* villagers or by Russians who had migrated years ago from the interior Provinces. It was precisely this fact which made these estates particularly attractive to the officials, as it enabled them to turn an honest penny. A certain Yusefovitch bought an estate of 1,017 dessiatines (a dessiatine is equal to 2·7 acres) for 4,804 roubles, and resold it to the peasants for 25,000 roubles. Another estate, for which 506 roubles were paid to the crown, was resold a few days later to the resident peasants for 15,000 roubles. A third Government official bought an estate for two roubles per

dessiatine, and immediately let it to its occupants, at a rental of twelve roubles a year per dessiatine!

Of course but few of the peasants were able to pay such a heavy ransom for their own land. And for those who could not pay there was the sole alternative : either to be evicted or to accept a sort of serfdom, *i.e.*, to work gratuitously on the estates of their new landlords as remuneration for that small portion of land which he vouchsafed to leave in their hands. Thus was the bulk of the rural population of these Provinces almost totally ruined, reduced to beggary and indigence, and decimated by hunger.

In distributing these iniquitous gifts, the administration in most cases could not even put forward any services rendered to the State (*i.e.*, useless scribbling for regularly paid salaries) as a pretext. A private person, a teacher, who was not so much as a member of the civil service, paid nine hundred roubles for an estate which he immediately resold for 15,000. Two gymnasts bought each an estate of 1,000 dessiatines for 2,000 roubles, to be paid over thirty-seven years, whilst both relet their land at once for 900 roubles per year.

There was no limit to the favouritism shown

by the uncontrollable administration. A father received an estate of 6,000 dessiatines ; whilst to his daughters 1,000 each were allotted, and to his sons 2,000 each. The son married ; his wife's relatives were endowed with an estate. The next to marry was a daughter—her husband received an estate, and his family another.

The contagion of this land hunger spread far beyond the sphere of Uffa and Orenburg officialdom. Scores of *tchinovniks* flocked from St. Petersburg and other quarters, probably armed with good introductions, and, after having "served" in the Provinces two or three years received their rewards in the form of splendid estates of from two to three thousand dessiatines and upwards, in the most fertile parts of the country, on the shores of big, navigable rivers.

The Ministry of the Interior, then presided over by Count Valueff, at last grew jealous of the privileges enjoyed by the Governor-General who had such an Eldorado to dispose of, and ended by distributing estates on its own account to its own favourites. When the senatorial revision of 1879, called forth by all these scandalous corruptions, began its investigations, several of the highest officers of the imperial court and Govern-

ment hastened to voluntarily resign their ill-gotten riches in order to avoid judicial proceedings.

It was rumoured that even the Minister of the Interior, Valueff, had had a finger in the pie. The reporters of German and English newspapers communicated news to that effect abroad, and the minister was indeed dismissed shortly after. The Russian press, however, in spite of this, received the following significant secret order, dated 4th October, 1881 :—"In some foreign periodicals it has been stated that Count P. A. Valueff has been implicated in the prosecutions now proceeding for misappropriation of land in the Orenburg region. The head board of management of the press department requests that the papers will not circulate, nor so much as mention these reports." Thus were these rumours suppressed without being so much as denied.

A no less conspicuous part in the wholesale speculation of land in the Uffa and Orenburg Provinces was played by the forcible or fraudulent "purchase" of land from the natives by the officials themselves, or with their active connivance. To show to what an impudent extent this legalized robbery was pushed one illustration will suffice.

In 1873 four local capitalists joined in purchasing from the Bashkir peasants 30,000 dessiatines of land, lying on the shores of the Uffa river, for the sum of 21,000 roubles, on condition that if it were afterwards found that there was more land in the estate than was specified in the agreement, they, the buyers, should have no further sum to pay.

(Such strange clauses as this are to be found in most agreements of this description, because the Bashkirs are easily cheated in the measurement of land.)

This agreement was, as usual, guaranteed by an enormous fine of 150,000 roubles. It was presented, as prescribed by law, for examination to the *mediator*, the immediate chief and protector of the peasants of his district, who approved of it and handed it on to head quarters, the Civil Board of Uffa, for registration. It was duly registered, and the four sharks formally invested with the right of ownership.

But at this point the Bashkirs "rebelled," and refused to fulfil their part of the engagement, and sent their men to lodge complaints in various quarters. After a "long series of charges," the Governor-General resolved to send a special Inspector to the spot to enquire into the case.

This Inspector chanced to be an honest man, who investigated the matter fairly, and reported : first, that the estate purchased comprised full 70,000 dessiatines ; and secondly that it included splendid timber wood, which in these parts was worth no less than one hundred roubles a dessiatine. He discovered, moreover, as was natural, that the Bashkirs were quite unwilling to part with their property on such terms, and that the agreement to sell it had been extorted from them by threats, and under compulsion.

The *mediator*, their immediate superior, and the magistrate of the district, had ordered them to sign it, and had also arrested and removed from the village, "for disobedience and calumny against men in office," the twenty-four householders who had protested and absolutely declined to put their hands to the agreement. In conclusion, the Inspector reported that in acknowledgment of their services both the *mediator* and the magistrate had received small estates from their grateful clients.

The *mediators* and the *magistrates* were not the only officials who lent themselves to these disgraceful practices. Persons who held higher berths in the provincial government did the same.

Members of the Governor-General's Privy Council, who enjoyed the full confidence of the chief of the department, and through him held command over the police, "persuaded" the *Bashkirs* to sell their land to various persons on terms similar to those quoted above, and acquired on their own account about 30,000 dessiatines of land, mostly rich in timber wood.

A certain Shott, father-in-law of Cholodkovsky, chief of the Civil Service Department, acquired by similar "purchases" 50,000 dessiatines of land. Threats, extortions, imprisonment, and open violence were resorted to for crushing obstinate resistance. The officers most directly responsible for the protection of the peasantry from malversation and injustice, the *mediators* and the members of the 'Peasants' Court of Justice, had the largest share in this wholesale plunder.

A special commissioner, a General and chamberlain to the Emperor, Burnasheff, was sent from St. Petersburg in 1874 for the purpose of revising the Uffa Civil Board. He reported that everything was as it should be there. But it was afterwards discovered that he had himself "purchased" an estate of 20,000 dessiatines for 40,000 roubles in the Belebeef district, with the

usual prescription of 80,000 roubles in case of the non-fulfilment of the agreement. This transaction was, however, annulled by the Senate in 1878.

The total number of agreements of this complexion registered by the Uffa Civil Board up to the time of the arrival of the Senatorial Inquiry Commission was one hundred and twelve; and the area of land covered by them was nothing less than one million dessiatines, or 2,700,000 acres.

The Senatorial Inquiry Commission sent into these Provinces by special order of the Emperor annulled some of the most scandalous of these legalized robberies, whilst some of the highest officials returned to the crown the estates they had received, declaring their ignorance of the injustice done to the peasantry who had previously held it. But the enormous majority of these land-robbers were not so sensitive about their reputations, and contrived to keep their booty. This has been revealed by the agrarian disturbances which occurred in these Provinces some three years later, in 1882, and which extended over four districts.

The Bashkirs of the Province of Uffa have been despoiled of their land definitely and irre-

trievably. The Governor-General, Kryshanovsky, who had headed the band of robbers, was dismissed; other officials got off with a "reprimand;" no one was indicted before a regular tribunal. Even this rebuke, however mild, was caused by the absolute want of discretion and moderation shown on the part of the robbers themselves, who in the fever of greed forgot all moderation and caution; and made the Uffa malversations a byword to the whole Russian Press.

In the neighbouring province of Samara, which lies on the left shore of the Middle Volga, and covers an area three times as large as Switzerland, the Administration has done, exactly the same thing, without incurring any annoyance. The ethnographical and economical conditions of these two contiguous regions are pretty much the same, the northern part of the Samara plain, the Bagulminsk district, being chiefly populated by Bashkirs, the southern by Russian colonists, with a sprinkling of native Mordvas and Kalmuks, the latter mostly keeping to a nomadic state.

Twenty years ago the land was so plentiful in these parts that the peasants could rent from the crown or from the native nomads as much as they chose for from ten to fifteen kopecks a

dessiatine. During the last twenty to twenty-five years things have gradually changed. The land was despoiled by officials and the private individuals whom they favoured. Up to 1881 the total amount of land thus abstracted from the Russian settlers amounted to about 700,000 dessiatines, or 1,890,000 acres. Enormous tracts of land were taken from the Kalmuks by means of sham purchases, more vile even than those practised upon the agricultural Bashkirs. The spoliation was effected gradually and cautiously, but the final result was the same. The Samara peasantry, prosperous in bygone days, is now one of the most wretched and hunger-stricken. Famine is of constant recurrence in this Province, the most terrible being those of 1878 and 1881, when, in some villages, one-fourth of the whole population died from starvation. In the same years millions of puds of corn were exported from the Province by the landlords, who batted on the land which had been robbed from the people.

If we skip the Province of Astrakhan, composed mostly of saline sands, where nothing can be got to grow and which are not worth robbing, we shall find ourselves in the Caucasus—the gem

of nature, the country which disputes with the valley of the Euphrates the glory of having been the place chosen for the earthly Paradise of tradition. Our great poets and novelists, Pushkin, Lermontoff, Tolstoi, owe many of their best inspirations to the snowclad Caucasus, and they have all contributed to render familiar and dear to the Russians its sumptuous, grand, and grim character, as well as its noble, simple, and chivalrous inhabitants.

Nowadays, though as poetical as ever, the Caucasus has ceased to be the country of romance. Its warlike mountaineers are subdued; the country is peaceful; the Hadji Abrecks, the Kazbitchs, the Ismail Beys, the Abrecks, the terror of the valleys, are no longer to be met with there in living flesh and blood. These heroes of the poniard and scimitar have disappeared under forty years of uncontested Russian rule, and in the natural course of things have been supplanted by robbers, who may very possibly be as mischievous as they, but who certainly have nothing of romance or left about them. The plunder of the State

of the people as regards their landed wealth (we will confine ourselves to this question here), by the Caucasian Administration and its *protégés*,

combines the characteristics of both the Uffa and the Samara robberies.

It is as extensive and bare-faced as in the first-named Province, and as safe as in the last. The Caucasus is administered, not by a simple Governor-General but by a grandee of a much higher grade, a lieutenant who is, with rare exceptions, a Grand Duke, brother, or uncle of the Czar. Nothing need be feared behind such a screen. Moreover, the dangers and difficulties of the conquest of the Caucasus, though they ceased to exist some thirty-eight years ago, still furnish a good pretext for the distribution of sinecures.

In this fabulously rich country the Government owns vast tracts of land, forests, mines of priceless value, and mineral springs classed under our hundred and eleven "heads" in the official list, which, however, bring to the exchequer next to nothing—at the outside an average of seven or three roubles per estate. The reason for this is very simple: the greatest number, two hundred and fifty-five out of four hundred and eleven, given to *tchinovniks* almost free of charge. In the Province of Kutais an estate comprising 2,000 dessiatines of arable land was let to a *tchinovnik*

ten roubles or, £1, a year. In the Viliet district of the same Province, 1,000 dessiatines of arable land were let to another man at a rental of twenty-five roubles per annum; and so on. (Slovo 1880, VII.)

During the same period, from 1866 to 1875, the administration disposed of about 100,000 dessiatines of land, from which its former inhabitants, the Circassians, had been expelled with fire and sword. Of this, 23,000 dessiatines were distributed amongst the military, and 26,000 amongst members of the Civil Service, whilst 50,000 were sold at merely nominal prices to a lot of speculators who obtained the protection of the administration.

In the vicinity of Baku lies the land containing the petroleum springs, which is valued at from 25,000 to 60,000 roubles a dessiatine. After the abolition of the power of sale by auction of some of the State revenue, this land was declared inalienable. Yet General Staroselsky, Prince Withenstein, and Prince Amilakhvary were each presented with ten dessiatines of this most valuable land. The Princess of Gagarine, wife of the Governor of the Province of Kutais, received five dessiatines of petroleum land, which she exchanged for 7,000 dessiatines of ordinary arable land in the

Province of Stavropol. Other five dessiatines of this same land were granted to the Princess Orbeliany. Full forty-five dessiatines were presented to the members of the Caucasian Civil Service for their relief fund. At the time to which all these statements refer, the short liberal respite of 1881, when the press was permitted to allude to such subjects, it was proposed to distribute the greater part of the forest covering the shores of the Black Sea in Abkhasia amongst the members of the Civil Service.

Our story will never draw to a close if we attempt to mention all that came to light in this question of land-robbery in the border provinces alone.

And how about the central provinces? Are the peasants dwelling there guaranteed at least against this form of oppression? Not quite,—though of course nothing like the wholesale theft going on in the border lands is possible here. In the interior, land is taken by instalments, a bit here and a bit there. The chief means employed to this end are legal chicanery and litigations, in which all the advantages are on the side of the great people, especially if they are members of the local administration. Since the Emanci-

pation, hundreds of thousands of dessiatines have been filched from the peasantry by means of thousands of these lawsuits, which differ from open robbery only in name. The highest dignitary of the empire and the noble aristocrats themselves have not recoiled before such methods of enrichment. Count Dmitry Tolstoy, the minister, has despoiled the peasants on his Riazan possessions of their land; Count Sheremeteff is doing the same thing with the forty-two villages of the Gorbatov district, the inhabitants of which, to the number of 8,000 souls, were formerly his serfs.

The Tartars of the Crimea are still struggling for their strip of land with Count Mordvinoff. It is no uncommon thing for the despotic powers of the administration to be called upon to facilitate the success of these lawsuits. Thus, for instance, in No. 163 of the *Russian Courier* for 1881 we read that a peasant named Mikhailoff of Novosilka, a village in the Birutch district, Province Voroneje, was exiled by order of the administration to the province of Archangel. The offence alleged against him was that he incited his fellow-villagers not to pay their taxes. But the real facts of the case were as follows;

—the peasants of the villages of Novosilka, Podleska, and several others, had a lawsuit about some land with the neighbouring landlords, Sheglov, Sinelnikoff, and others. The peasant Mikhailoff was chosen by the joint village *mir* as their delegate. He commenced operations with great activity, and discovered documents proving the injustice of the landlords' claims. They thought it advisable to have him removed.

Cases of downright robbery are not wanting either. The method generally adopted is, to forge resolutions of the *mir*, ordering that the coveted piece of land shall be yielded up. In No. 142 of the *Russkia Vedomosty* for 1881 the following curious incident is recorded. In the Fatej district of the Province of Kursk a certain lady, Nikitina, sold to various persons eighty-three dessiatines of land, which she of course stated to be her own, for two hundred and fifteen roubles a dessiatine. But when the new owners came to take possession of their property, they found it was occupied by the peasants of the village, Archangelskoie, who on hearing the claims of the new comers expressed the greatest surprise, and, flatly refusing to yield the land, drove away the intruders. At this Madame Nikitina applied

to the *ispravnik*, who sent the *stanovoi* to the spot. This gentleman arrived at Archangelskoie, and having convened the peasants' *mir* began to admonish them not to offer rebellious resistance. The peasants answered unanimously that they had no desire to rebel against anybody, but that they would not give up the land, because it was their own, and they had never sold it to Nikitina, nor to anybody else, and knew nothing about the matter.

An agreement to that purport existed, however, dated 13th September, 1878, and was witnessed by a member of the Peasants' Court, who gave testimony to the effect that he had read this agreement before the *mir*, and was told that everything was correct, after which the deed was approved by the Peasants' Court, on 30th January, 1881, though it bore on the face of it the evidence of being a forgery. It did not bear the seal of the Archangelskoie *mir*, and it was signed by a total stranger to the village—the coachman of the member in question—and was witnessed as genuine by three servants of Madame Nikitina.

The *Golos* for the same year reported several similar cases as having occurred in the

district of Balta, Province of Podolsk. Here the very men in office actually appropriated a good deal of peasants' land, by means of forged agreements, which the communal clerks drew up in the name of the *mir* by order of the *mediators*. One of the *mediators*, in virtue of such an agreement, received from the peasants as a *bresent* three hundred dessiatines of land, which constituted the only means of subsistence for a whole village. "It is easy to imagine," adds the correspondent, "the despair of the peasants when they were told that they had 'presented' the *mediator* with the only piece of arable land which they possessed."

Instances of such shameless abuses as these are, according to the *Golos*, numerous in the Province of Podolsk.

In other places, according to *Novoe Vremya*, the communal clerks drew up fraudulent agreements of this nature for their own benefit. In the Starobelsk district, in 1881, the Novoidarsk Commune brought an action against their elder, Russenoff, for appropriating 1,000 dessiatines of communal land by means of a forged agreement (*Golos*, 1881).

These are a few specimens selected from among a heap of facts which the temporary relaxation

of the censorship of the press has enabled the Russian newspapers to publish. Since 1882 we have heard no more of them, this class of publications being prohibited as inflammatory, and calculated to "disturb the public mind." They are considered seditious, and would involve severe punishment by the censorship.

With regard to the misappropriation of land, this is certainly not likely to diminish by the withdrawal of even this slight check.

The peasants are pretty nearly defenceless against the coalition of robbers. The official control is little more than a mere fiction. The central government depends necessarily on the information it receives from the *tchinovniks*, i.e., the very accomplices or perpetrators of the robberies. And when some *tchinovnik* of good position, head of some board or governor of some province, is not actively compromised by the misdeeds of his subordinates, he screens them and conceals their actions none the less when once committed, because he is personally responsible to his superiors for all which happens within his jurisdiction. The all-directing, all-controlling Autocracy is a myth. The real Autocracy has long been broken up into a series of petty despotisms

—a sort of feudalism, which reproduces in modern Russia the same phenomenon discovered by the historical school of economists as existing in Western Europe in the middle ages,—the conversion of political power into economical predominance, of which the robbery of the land from the people is the most striking feature.

At the base of these operations, wherever committed, lies brute force. The Russian *tchinovniks* have at their disposal the military forces of the State, which they are free to use themselves, or to lend to any private person when needed, to put down any resistance which the peasants may offer to the appropriation of their land by any one of the methods described above.

Rebellions of the peasantry, followed by "military executions," having their origin in the embezzlement of land, can be counted by the score, though these events are rarely honoured with more than a short and dry notice in the newspaper chronicles of the day. Exceeding few are allowed to be thoroughly investigated and discussed. When some particularly gross abuse committed against the peasants forces itself upon the public notice and that of the higher ministerial circles, it is the deliberate policy of the govern-

ment, ministers and Czar included, to hush the matter up as much and for as long as possible, because, taking the Russian reading and thinking public as it now is, nothing stirs it half so deeply as do affairs of this nature.

Among dozens of scandalous trials for bribery, embezzlement of the public funds, plunder in the Ordnance Department, etc., which the Government allowed to be heard in public, we remember only one important case—that of the Governor of the Province of Minsk, General Tokareff, and the man associated with him, in which the prosecution, followed by a public trial, was due to the initiative of the Government. Other famous “peasant cases,” such as Count Bobrinsky’s, Prince Sherbatoff’s, etc., only came to light owing to some outrages committed by the peasants, who appeared as the prosecuted party, the Government exercising to the full its power over the press to prevent these affairs from being well thrashed out.

The Tokareff affair is a very instructive one, and is well worth studying for more reasons than one. It was tried before the fifth department of the Senate in November 1881, though the offence was committed in 1874. It took seven years

to make its circuitous way to the court, and it was by a mere accident that it was not altogether swamped on the way. The trial only began in 1878, *four years* after the commission of the crime. The chief offender, General Tokareff, had by that time been promoted from the governorship of the Province of Minsk to the post of Special Commissioner of the Red Cross in Bulgaria, and was, together with his accomplice General Loshkareff, a member of the Ministerial Council. The third hero in the Loghishino affair, Colonel Kapger, had been created Knight of the Order of Vladimir, and he too was pursuing his noble career elsewhere. The trio would probably have been left unmolested to the present day had not two hostile parties at the court of St. Petersburg broken out into open strife.

The Trepoff-Shouvaloff-Potapoff Coalition, all-powerful at the court before 1877, received a severe blow by the Zassoulitch trial, which revealed Trepoff's infamous brutalities. His numerous opponents thought the moment most opportune for entirely crushing the coalition by a new blow and resolved to disinter the Loghishino affair, which would compromise several of the gang

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Four years previously Potapoff, then Governor-General of the Lithuanian Provinces, had allowed his follower and subordinate Tokareff, then Governor of the Province of Minsk, to take several thousand dessiatines of land from the peasants of Loghishino. The act was committed under peculiarly aggravating circumstances, as the peasants struggled hard for their property. They "rebelled" several times, and were put down by a liberal allowance of flogging, but did not give up the fight. They lodged their complaint with the Senate, and after two years of litigation succeeded in 1876 in gaining their suit.

The Loghishino peasants, in so far as they recovered their property, were much more fortunate than most of their fellow-victims. They never thought, however, of taking further action against their former Governor for his past offences. But on this occasion Potapoff's adversaries, then in the majority in the ministry, became unusually alive to the people's wrongs. They brought the matter before the first department of the Senate. They fared badly in this, their first attack. The Senate, where Potapoff's party was probably well represented, opined that the affair ought to be concluded by a "reprimand" to Tokareff and

his accomplices. Then the ministers discussed the matter at a cabinet council, and resolved to report the affair to the Emperor. The document wound up with the following remarkably bold and novel truth: "We consider it to be the duty of the Government to take severe and impartial legal action in cases such as this, of misdemeanour on the part of men in office." The Emperor's hand traced the word "certainly" opposite this sentence. Nevertheless the Potapoff party for three years succeeded in preventing the fulfilment of the Emperor's resolution. The affair was not adjudicated until 1881.

It was not in vain that the two hostile parties contended so bitterly—the one to bring it before the public, the other to hush it up. The details of the affair were sufficiently revolting to make it an ideal battering-ram. The Province of Minsk, of which Tokareff was Governor, forms a part of the vast region to which converged the greed of the Russian *tchinovniks*, until they discovered still richer prey in the enormous eastern outskirts of the empire. After the suppression of the Polish insurrection of 1863-64, the Government confiscated a total area of 60,914 dessiatines of land belonging to such landlords as had been implicated

in patriotic conspiracies. • These spoils of the vanquished the Government threw as prey to its officials, and especially to the bloodhounds who had helped to quench the insurrection,—as the hunter throws the remains of the skinned beast to his dogs.

This rich booty did not suffice to satisfy the appetites of the crew. When the best of the landed property had been appropriated amongst them, the *tchinovniks* began to plunder the peasants, according to the common methods as practised elsewhere. One of these *tchinovniks* was the Governor of the Province of Minsk himself, General Tokareff, who obtained from the Governor-General of the region, Potapoff, an estate of 3,000 dessiatines, yielding an income of about 9,000 roubles a year, for the sum of 14,000 roubles, payable over twenty years. Tokareff's vassal, Sevastianoff, chairman of the Local Board of Minsk, carved out this estate for him from the land which belonged by right to the peasants of Loghishino.

It is evident that both Sevastianoff and Tokareff committed this act of flagrant robbery in full cognizance of the fact, though they denied it before the tribunal. The Loghishino peasants had been in possession of the land claimed by Tokareff from time immemorial, and had never

paid an iota of rent to the Local Board. This could hardly be ignored by the Chairman of the Local Board, more especially as Loghishino is only twenty-five miles distant from Minsk. In addition to this, the peasants could show ample documental evidence in support of their rights, the best proof of which is the eventual success of their suit before the Senate in 1876 : a charter from the King of Poland, and an *ukaz* confirming their rights from the Russian Senate. On being apprised of the impending transfer of their land to their Governor, they sent their deputies to the latter to explain to him how the matter stood, and at the same time forwarded the senatorial *ukaz* to Sevastianoff. The Governor, however, refused to listen to anything. As to the *ukaz* sent to Sevastianoff, it mysteriously "disappeared" at the office, and could never be recovered : in other words, it was stolen either by Sevastianoff on behalf of the Governor, or by his direction. When the Ministry to which the Loghishino peasants appealed, upon the failure of their applications at Minsk, applied for information at Minsk upon the subject, to the Minsk Local Government Board, Sevastianoff replied that the peasants' claims were void of any

foundation, and that the land was unquestionably State property, and that therefore there could be no legal obstacle to its transfer.

The Governor-General himself did not lie idle. On learning that five peasants had been deputed to St. Petersburg to push forward the Loghishino suit, Tokareff reported to the ministry that these deputies were revolutionary agitators. They were accordingly at once locked up, and without further trial exiled to the northern Littoral, as is the custom in such cases with our Administration.

Having thus removed all obstacles, Tokareff was in 1874 formally invested with the rights of ownership over the Loghishino estate. But when he sent his agents to collect the rents the peasants refused to pay, and drove away the police. Twenty-six peasants were arrested and thrown into the Minsk prison. Tokareff's next move was to send small detachments of troops against the village to compel obedience and levy the money. The peasants, however, persisted in their refusal. When the troops were drawn up before them, they tried to force the line, but were driven back at the butt-end of the musket. The soldiers then fired a volley with blank cartridges, and withdrew without resorting to more .

drastic measures, the officer in command not being anxious probably to obtain a cross or promotion for the putting down of "civil enemies."

On the first news of the failure of the expedition—*four days before* the official report reached him—Tokareff hastened to telegraph to St. Petersburg that the Loghishino peasants had broken out into open rebellion and had repulsed the troops. Such a grave emergency requiring strong and prompt measures, the ministry sent a special commissioner from St. Petersburg, General Loshkareff, with most extensive powers. On October 25th, 1874, the General arrived at Minsk, received from Tokareff one battalion of soldiers, with 250 Cossacks, and marched against the "rebels."

In the subsequent, most revolting, part of the proceedings, the leading actor is Colonel Kapger, the *ispravnik* of Minsk, whom Tokareff attached to the expedition quite unlawfully. The duty of assisting the military in compelling obedience from the peasantry belonged of right to the *ispravnik* of Pinsk, Zolotnizky, because the Loghishino commune was in his district. Tokareff did not want to trust an affair of such personal interest to himself to the local police.

Kapger was under the circumstances a much fitter person, and was therefore attached to the expedition "as an experienced and capable police officer, to try and persuade the peasants to submit to the law," as the mealy-mouthed Governor explained in his own justification.

Kapger did not disappoint the expectations of his chief. His first precaution was to stow away in the Loghishino police-station (*stan*) several cart-loads of birch rods. When this order had been executed, he arrived on the 31st October at about mid-day at the village, and appeared before the peasants in the public square escorted by two policemen. He then began to abuse and vilify the villagers for their ill-behaviour, and announced that "an army was advancing on them, with a General who was authorized to bury them alive, to flog them to death, to shoot them, to do with them as he would with rebels,—anything he chose, if they would not at once submit."

The frightened people said they would submit, and hastened to send three deputies forward to meet and propitiate the terrible General. They met him at a few miles' distance from the village, and said that they submitted and would pay rent to General Tokareff. This did not, however, stay

the advance of Losnkareff, who entered Loghishino at the head of his troops at night time, and immediately ordered the Cossacks to invest the village from all parts, "lest anyone might escape." A second deputation then came before him, bringing the traditional "bread and salt," in token of welcome and obedience. But the General said he would not accept these offerings from "rebels," until they had repented and fulfilled the claims of their landlord, who demanded about 500 roubles as a part of the rent for 1874, and 5,000 for the arrears owing to him for 1873.

This claim was a most impudent extortion. Tokareff had only been invested with the right of ownership in 1874. Any claim on the rent for the previous year was therefore absolutely illegal. On being questioned on this point by the tribunal, Tokareff explained that though he was formally invested with the right of ownership in 1874, still it had been reported to the chairman of the Local Board (his friend and accomplice Sevastianoff) that the Loghishino peasants were *informed* a year before by a *tchinovnik* of the Minsk courts of justice (who had neither juridical nor even administrative powers over them) that they must hand over one third of the harvest to

Tokareff. Then Stanovoi Trikovsky made a valuation, unassisted even by the local surveyor, and most generously adjudicated full 12,000 roubles to his chief, who reduced the sum to 5,500 roubles. Thus were the Loghishino peasants not merely robbed of their land, but had to present Tokareff with the capital which he had to disburse in the transaction!

The poor people could not, however, afford to ponder on the injustice of their case in the face of this array of bayonets and Cossacks. They submitted, pleading only for a short respite in which to sell some of their goods in order to make up the required sum. No respite was granted them. The General told them in firm but moderate language, as became so high an official, that they must collect and deposit in his hands the sum of 5,500 roubles within forty-eight hours, otherwise he would compel them to pay the whole sum of 12,000 roubles.

On this he retired, and shut himself up in the house assigned to him, leaving the command to the *ispravnik* Kapger. This officer went at once to the root of the matter, and showed to the full extent how "experienced" and "capable" he was in fulfilling the mission assigned to him by the

Governor. He refused to wait for the money even until the next morning. He rushed upon the peasants as one possessed, abusing them, calling them names, stamping his foot, boxing them on the ears, and shouting, "The rods, bring the rods! I will flog you to death! I will flay you alive!"

He did not want the peasants to distribute the contribution demanded, according to their means. He made short work of all these formalities by assigning twenty-five roubles as the amount to be paid by each of the 233 households. Those who said they had not the money and could not pay at once were sent to the police station, and there flogged until they promised to find the money, selling their goods to the Jews of the village for a song, or borrowing from them the money at an interest of from one and a half to three per cent. *a week*. As the Loghishino peasants were poor people, according to the statements of the policemen themselves, many suffered very severely. One of the witnesses, the deputy Korolevitch, testified that the peasant Malokhovsky was beaten so savagely that he had never since fully recovered. He was a non-commissioned officer, and had only just returned from his regiment. He had had no time to get

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settled in his home, and was very poor. When summoned before Kapger, who was sitting at the police-station, he gave him full particulars as to why he was unable to pay the twenty-five roubles. He was conducted to the execution-chamber, and there flogged by two policemen under the personal superintendence of Kapger. After some time Kapger stopped the flogging, and asked whether he would bring the money or not. On receiving the same answer as before, he ordered the men to flog him once more. When he was again released, he said to Kapger that "whilst in the Czar's service he had never undergone the shame of corporal punishment." For this "impertinence" Kapger ordered him to be flogged for the third time. But even after that Malokhovsky brought no money, which was paid for him by the *mir*.

Lukashevitch, an old man of sixty-nine years, begged the *ispravnik* to give him a short respite, but the latter struck him in the face twice so violently that he could not keep his feet. Then he ordered him to the flogging-room, where he was flogged three times, Kapger telling his men to strike more heavily, and asking the victim whether he would bring the money now?

Many fainted under the ordeal. Kapger himself superintended the execution of the sentences, giving his men instructions as to how to use the rods so as to cause the victims to suffer more acutely. None were spared. The deputy Korolevitch testified to the fact that Kapger demanded the money even from a blind old beggar, Adam Tatarevitch, and when he said he had no money Kapger struck the poor fellow in the face, and was about to have him flogged ; but Tatarevitch went to the village, and came back with ten roubles he had collected in Christ's name from his fellow-villagers.

The subordinates treated the people with the bestial brutality of invaders. A retired soldier, Chechotka by name, stated on oath that the *ispravnik's* men came to fetch him to the police-station in the dead of night, about twelve o'clock ; that whilst he was dressing himself one Cossack struck his pregnant wife on the back with his horsewhip so cruelly that she fainted, and the next day miscarried.

By such means as these Kapger levied in two days the whole sum of 5,500 roubles, which were duly forwarded to the Governor. The troops retired, and General Loshkareff returned to St.

Petersburg, to report to the Emperor that order was restored in Loghishino, and that the rebellion had been put down without the use of fire-arms or *any violence*, thanks to the courage and ability of the *ispravnik*, Kapger, who had succeeded in persuading the mob to submit to the just claims of their landlord! Loshkareff was rewarded by the thanks of the Emperor, whilst Kapger was decorated with one of the highest military orders. (*Poriadoc*, 1881, No. 330-340.)

This is a fair sample of the truthfulness of the official reports, and the whole affair is typical of the style in which the military carried the law into effect. Of course such utter scamps as Colonel Kapger are rare, even in the ranks of the Russian police. Few *ispravniks* would strike a blind old man in the face, or take actual pleasure in the operation of flogging. But out of the seven hundred *ispravniks* and the two thousand *stanovois* of the Empire, there are hardly a dozen who during their term of service have not had to "put down" several of these "rebellions" amongst the peasantry, generated by the same feelings of despair, and subdued by the same methods of military pressure and wholesale flogging, as in the examples cited above.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER the beasts of prey—the vermin. Naturalists say that the most mischievous enemies of unprotected and primitive man are not the big carnivora with whom he has to fight now and then on unequal terms, but the lower forms of creation,—the insects, the mice, rats, wild birds, and other small pilferers, which overwhelm him by their numbers and omnipresence.

I will not venture to say that the same holds good with respect to the two classes of parasites which our paternal government has set on the *moujiks*. It is beyond doubt that both are extremely obnoxious. As to the question which of the two is the most so, it is rather difficult to give a positive answer.

The upper police and administrative officials—the *tchinovniks*—unquestionably commit enormous material damage among the people. But as they come into immediate contact with the peasantry on comparatively rare occasions, they

cannot have much effect upon the moral side of the people's life. With the inferior police the reverse is the case. It must be granted that even as a question of finance they are a very heavy additional burden to the people. The 5744 *uriadniks* (rural constables) created in 1878, and constantly added to since, represent an outlay of 2,600,000 roubles a year, or about *twice* the sum the State Exchequer spends on primary education.

As every *uriadnik* extracts from the rural population subjected to him, by bribes, blackmail, and other devices, on an average at least twice as much as he receives in salary, the total cost of this amiable institution represents a good round sum, for which a much better use might be found than the support of this horde of blackguards. But monetary damages become almost trivialities by the side of the vexations, insults, petty everyday tyranny, and demoralisation which are poured into our villages by these guardians of the peace—unique of their kind.

To give the ring of truth to these strange statements, we have only to draw a sketch of these *uriadniks*, and how they came to exist.

When the Nihilist rebellion first burst forth, it assumed, as is well known, the aspect of a vast agrarian agitation in favour of the restitution of the land to its tillers. As the same aspirations, though obscured by the mists of monarchical superstitions, were smouldering among the whole of our agricultural class, the Government at once took the greatest alarm.

The fierce hunting of the Nihilist began through all Russia. The peasants did not rise in arms at the voice of the agitators, perplexed, bewildered by the unheard of appeal. But in the relentless chase after the Nihilists they kept aloof, and often assisted the propagandists to escape from the hands of their persecutors. The active part in the drama was played by the local officers of the State,—the police, the *stanovois*, the *ispravniks*, and the volunteer spies, who were furnished by the newly-born class of rural usurers, plunderers of the people and upstarts, who had fished in troubled waters. But in a well-regulated autocracy nothing can be left to private enterprise, least of all the craft of a spy. As to the local agents of the State police, they were so surcharged with so many other duties, and had under their super-

vision districts so vast, as to render an effective and minute survey impossible.

In 1878 a force of rural constabulary was created, and from that moment commenced the Babylonian captivity of the Russian peasantry to the police.

The *uriadniks* were created in order to strengthen the hands of the rural police, headed by the *ispravniks* and their assistants the *stanovois*. The *uriadniks* are therefore under the command of these officers, in their quality of general police agents. But like the gendarmerie created by the Emperor Nicholas I. for the benefit of the towns-people, their rural brothers are placed in a peculiar position.

The duties of the *uriadniks* are extensive and manifold. They are the masters of the village communes in the same sense as the governors are called the masters of their respective Provinces. Besides the function of chief of the communal police, they unite in their persons those of sanitary inspectors, inspectors of roads and buildings, and statistical agents, etc. They poke their noses into everything, prying into private households, and enforcing various prescriptions intended by the idle bureaucratic imagination for the

benefit of the *moujiks*. Thus forsooth they must see that the peasant's house be ventilated and the windows opened, even during the winter time, when people have hardly fuel enough to keep the hard frost out of the door. To secure purity of air they are bound to prevent the keeping of manure in open courts near the houses, when in the whole of Russia not a single peasant, save a few German settlers, has an artificial dung-pit. The same solicitude for the stupid *moujiks*, who cannot feel the disadvantage of keeping cattle within their dwellings, inspired the prohibition of that bad practice, though the young cattle would otherwise be frozen in the courts, as the peasants have no warm stables.

Neither is the exterior of the village neglected. The *uriadnik* must see that the streets be kept clean, though in the villages there is no trace of a pavement, and the streets during the spring and the autumn, six months out of the twelve, are knee deep in mud. A lot of other equally benevolent and equally stupid prescriptions exist, relating to food, the construction of the houses, gardening, etc., all of which are fair examples of bureaucratic perspicacity and knowledge of the things with which they have to deal.

All this is amusing, but to an outsider only. To the peasants it is a very serious matter. The more absurd the order is, the easier is it for an *uriadnik* to convert it into a means of extortion and a source of abuse, owing to the exorbitant, the monstrous powers with which the *uriadniks* are armed in their quality of political bloodhounds.

Only a despotic government fully conscious of its many sins could in a fit of well-grounded fear put such powers into the hands of subordinate agents. They can enter anybody's house at any time of the day or of the night, examine everything, and question anybody as to any actions and purposes which may seem to them suspicious. They have the right of arresting and taking into custody any citizen of the district at their own discretion, without first obtaining any special warrant or authorization. The elders and the communal police are bound to arrest and to march off any prisoner at the bidding of the *uriadniks*.

Now let us ask, What are the moral and intellectual guarantees offered by these people, entrusted with such extensive powers over the liberty, honour, and property of their fellow-citizens? Whence does this horde of village proconsuls spring?

An *uriadnik* receives a salary of £20 a year, which, taking into account the cheapness of living in a Russian village, would represent from £40 to £50 at the English rate of value. We cannot therefore expect to see well-educated people in their ranks, quite apart from the aversion felt in Russia by all men of self-respect to the acceptance of any post connected with the police. Moreover, the considerable amount of physical exertion required from the *uriadniks* as a rule excludes the petty *tchinovniks*.

But as the *uriadnik's* duties imply a considerable amount of legal chicanery, they cannot be recruited at random from among simple folk, such as retired soldiers or non-commissioned officers. The *uriadniks* are chiefly picked up from among the dregs of the Government servants of the towns, and the outcasts of the intellectual professions : scribes out of employment, petty police-officers turned out of their posts for bribery or drunkenness, and so forth. In spite of this, this rabble, which had to be watched and watched like a host of pickpockets in a crowded room, were exempted by the Czar's government, to a quite exceptional degree, from any control whatever. The Russian press, as is well known, is not

allowed to indulge over much in the exposure of the abuses and misdeeds of any of the members of the official hierarchy; but to attack a gendarme, a political spy, any officer connected with the defence of the autocracy against its civil enemies is considered almost as a personal insult to the Czar.

The *uriadniks*, in their capacity of rural gendarmes, were on their creation granted the same immunity. The press was strictly prohibited from publishing any exposure of their vices. This fact, however strange it may sound, was publicly disclosed three years later by several Russian newspapers.

In the *Zemstro* newspaper of December 31st, 1880, the following details are explicitly given by the responsible editors: "At the founding of the *uriadniks* all possible care was taken to present them in the most favourable light to the public. To this end the *Official Messenger* and the official papers, which exist in every province, published, by order of the Minister, a number of reports tending to show their activity, sometimes put into the form of special narratives, sometimes in the form of statistical tables. Whilst, on the other hand,

shortly after 'the law of 9th June, 1878 (instituting the *uriadniks*), had received due attention, namely, in September of the same year, the editors of all the newspapers and periodicals 'were ordered not to allow any censure of the activity of the police to appear in their respective columns, nor to 'discredit it,' by exposing any of its abuses. In case of the transgression of this order the delinquents were threatened with most stringent penalties. Thus did the *uriadniks* become quite inviolable to the press."

It may be added that the government defended these ~~its~~ Benjamins, charged with 'protecting it against agrarian revolution—even against their immediate superiors in office, the *stanovois* and *ispravniks*.

When this herd of 5,744 brutal invaders, scattered amongst the Russian villages, began their exploits, even the not particularly scrupulous law-abiding gentlemen of the police felt that they were bound to interfere. Numbers of *uriadniks* were turned out, or at least driven from one district to another, by way of disciplinary punishment. In order to suppress this flagrant proof of their worthlessness, the Minister

of the Interior, General Makoff, expressed marked disapprobation to the police authorities wherever there had been frequent expulsions, "calculated to diminish the prestige of the *uriadniks* in the eyes of the peasantry." No wonder that the *uriadniks* grew so conceited with their self-importance that in the Province of Poltava, when one of them was fined eleven roubles by the magistrate, he flew into such a passion as to inveigh against the magistrate in open court, and to threaten him with a "protocol."

We have dwelt on these details at the risk of wearying our reader, because they prove to demonstration the fallacy of a very common prejudice concerning the Russian government. It is supposed that the educated class only are subjected to police tyranny. This is not so. Our government is free from any taint of partiality. Whenever it smells some danger to its own skin, all "the dear children," both peasants and the well-to-do, are dealt with on exactly the same footing.

The quite anomalous position created for these guardians of the public safety could lead to only one consequence. The *uriadniks* became the scourge of our villages, the terror of the peasants,

the chief perpetrators of such violence and extortion as had never been heard of before. "Being perfect strangers to the village," says the *Zemstro* newspaper, "they despise the peasantry, as all upstarts do. They look on the rustics subjected to their control as invaders do upon a conquered people, on whom they may work their will. The extortions of the *uriadniks* in their insolence recall the rapacity of the soldiery. Not only are private individuals compelled to propitiate these *uriadniks* with bribes, but whole communes are saddled with illegal tribute. And such things happen not only in the remote corners of the vast Empire, but in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg itself."

In view of these experiences, the *Zemstvos* have repeatedly petitioned for the abolition of the *uriadniks*. At the sitting of the St. Petersburg Zemstvo on 17th January, 1881, the deputies expressed their opinion in the following strong terms:—"the magistrates Volkoff and Shakeef do affirm most positively that the *uriadniks* are simply a nuisance to the people. They are doing no good, and are unable to do any good, being chiefly recruited from amongst half-illiterate clerks who are out of employment, and who

take a distorted view of their duties." Baron Korf spoke to the same effect.

During the short Liberal respite of 1881 there was hardly one periodical, save Mr. Katkoff's *Moscow Gazette*, which did not pour out before its readers whole volumes of accumulated facts about the exploits of the *uriadniks*, varying in their nature from the too free use of the fist or whip to the most heinous and revolting crimes.

We will first open a page in the public career of a certain Makoorine, *uriadnik* of the Province of Samara, a jolly fellow, though somewhat excited and rough when in his cups. One fine morning, in the autumn of 1881, he arrived at the village of *Vorony Kust*, where a meeting was being held in the public hall. Here all his friends were met together, and amongst them Chaibool the Rich, a Tartar peasant. Having some business to transact with the *uriadnik*, Chaibool invited him, together with several common friends, to take a glass in his house. The meeting over, therefore, they left the hall in several cars. In opening the gate they let out a pig. The pig took it into its head to run after the *uriadnik*, though "Chaibool did his best to call it back." They crossed the village and reached

the fields, the pig still running after the *uriadnik's* car, with the evident intention of escorting him up to the house of his host. The rural magnate took it as a malicious insult to his dignity on the part of the beast, and shot the pig dead.

After having taken their refreshment with Chaibool the Rich they returned back to the village a little elevated. There they met with a publican, the owner of the killed pig, who asked the *uriadnik* to pay for the beast.

At such audacity Makoorine lost his temper, swore, boasted of his official importance, and, according to the unanimous testimony of all the witnesses, said that "he, the *uriadnik*, had the right to shoot not only pigs, but men too, there being a law to that effect." A retired soldier, John Kirilow, who was present, observed that he also had served the Czar, but had never heard of such a law.

Without wasting words on his adversary, the *uriadnik* flew on Kirilow, knocked him down, and then dragged him into the court, and, calling his coachman to his assistance, struck Kirilow again.

The guardian of public order was, for this breach of the peace, condemned to six weeks' imprisonment ; but as it was discovered that there

were no less than *fifteen* similar suits pending against him, he was put under police supervision until such time as the verdict was pronounced on his accumulated offences.

Another *uriadnik*, that of Malo-Archangelsk, at the time of the Carnival arrived in the village, "drunk as a fiddler." On entering the public hall he behaved with gross impropriety. He cut the tablecloth to pieces with his sabre, and reviled the members with most opprobrious names. When some persons tried to get him to listen to reason he flew at them, brandishing his sabre, and drove them all, both guests and owners, out of the building.

In Ivanovka the *uriadnik*, on entering the house of a peasant to make an inspection as to whether it was kept clean, saw a young calf tied to a table leg in the kitchen. At such slovenliness the *uriadnik* lost his temper, and after having reviled the women who were spinning in the other room, as best he could, he drew his sabre and cut the calf to pieces.

In Poroobejka an *uriadnik* came upon a woman making dough. She was in a hurry to make the bread for her household, and had left the floor unswept. Exasperated by this negligence, the

uriadnik, after giving the woman a severe scolding, overthrew the kneading-trough before the woman's eyes, and upset the dough on to the dirty floor.

In Dmitrovka the *uriadnik* Lastochkin met a wedding procession, going with songs, according to custom, from one relative of the newly-married couple to another. He ordered them to disperse at once, though the elder of the village was amongst them. One of the guests, Basily Kareff, remonstrated against such interference, explaining that they were celebrating a wedding. The *uriadnik* as his only answer struck Kareff twice with his whip.

The crowd got into a rage ; they flew at the *uriadnik* and handled him roughly. He would, perhaps, have fared yet worse had he not taken refuge in the parson's house.

On hearing of the disturbance the whole village assembled round the parsonage, clamouring to have the *uriadnik* delivered up to them, and it was only thanks to the soothing influence of the parson that the *uriadnik* escaped lynching. A protocol was drawn up about the "insult offered to the *uriadnik*," and Kareff was condemned to seven days' imprisonment.

All these examples, given by eye-witnesses to a correspondent of the *Zemstro* newspaper, refer to one small district alone. None of them are of any particular importance, but they contain much local colouring, and convey a pretty fair idea as to the moral physiognomy and distinctive attributes of the new type of our village magnates.

In one place the *uriadnik* fired into a crowd of unarmed people; in another charged a crowd busied in quenching a fire, on horseback, with sword and whip. In a third case, a freshly built peasant's house was demolished, under the pretext that it was not constructed "according to the regulations." In a fourth, the *uriadnik* assaulted and inflicted severe bodily injuries on a churchwarden, for not having appeared before him with sufficient alacrity when sent for.

In the Bogorodsk district the *uriadnik* was in the habit of stealing the peasants' oats for his own horse by night. When caught on one occasion in the act, so far was he from being put out of countenance that he threatened the owners with imprisonment, and then, having sent his errand-boy to fetch his sabre and revolver, declared himself to be engaged "in the execution of his duty," and triumphantly made his way through

the assembled throng. The *ispravnik*, on receiving complaints from the peasants, ordered the *stanovoi* to investigate the case. The accusation proved true, but the *uriadnik* was not even discharged, and continued to hold his office as guardian of the public safety in peace.

In one of the towns of the Province of Poltava, during fair time, the *uriadniks* formed themselves into a body, which wandered through the town, and amused themselves by tearing off the earrings and necklaces of the peasant women who came to the fair adorned in their best national attire, alleging that the national costume had been prohibited by the Czarina's *ukaz*.

We will close this list, which might be prolonged *ad libitum*, by mentioning some of those cases where these rural despots, accustomed to impunity, have given vent to their low instincts in acts which recall the worst features of the days of serfdom.

In the Mogilev district of the Province of Podol, Daniel Yasitsky, the *uriadnik* of the village Chemeris, after having for a long time and with impunity distinguished himself by the extortion of money from the innocent, and blackmail from such thieves as were caught in the act, whom he

was in the habit of setting free by his own authority,—this Daniel Yasitsky indulged in the following practical joke.

By threats and blows he compelled two of his subordinates, peasants' "decurions," to harness themselves into a car and drag him to the town of Bar, distant about four miles. Yasitsky was simply dismissed.

Another still more revolting case was tried before the St. Petersburg tribunal, April 23rd, 1886.

Gerassimoff, the *uriadnik* of the village Borki, in the Peterhof district, was convicted of having subjected several peasants to *the torture* in order to extort from them confessions about a robbery committed by unknown persons. A peasant named Marakine, and two brothers of the name of Antonoff, were all three kept hanging for several hours on a sort of improvised strappado. Stripped of their clothes, and barefoot, their hands were tied behind their backs by a rope, which was then passed over a rail, fixed high up in the wall of an ice cellar. The bodies of these unfortunate men were then raised above the level of the ice ground, which they could hardly touch with the tips of their toes.

The *uriadnik* now and then appeared, request-

ing them to confess, and dealing them blows on the head on their refusal to comply with his wishes. One of the three victims, the peasant Marakine, on the way to the torture-chamber was subjected to other treatment no less infamous. The testimony of the elder of the village is particularly characteristic. "Gerassimoff the *uriadnik* came to me and asked whether I could lend him thirty men. 'For what purpose do you need so many?' I asked. Then he answered, pointing to Marakine, 'I mean to make this fellow run the gauntlet.'" To this the witness made reply that he would never permit such things to be done to the peasants of his commune. Then Marakine's hands and legs were tied, and he was fastened by the legs to the back of the car, his body on the ground. The horse was then made to run, and Marakine was dragged in the mud for about ten yards. Then Gerassimoff said to the elder, "Bring me some straw, we will burn him a little," but witness refused to bring it to him.

Gerassimoff was found guilty, and sentenced to *one year's* penal servitude. So lenient is the Russian law towards crimes *against* humanity, reserving its ferocity for those who are working on behalf of humanity.

Such barbarities, which, had they been committed by a Turkish officer, would have set European diplomacy on fire, are of course exceptional, though it would be illogical to suppose them unique.

From the opposite end of the Empire we hear of things which are no better, indeed, if anything, rather worse. It was proved by judicial inquiry before the Kisheneff tribunal, that in the Orgheef district the *uriadnik* and the communal authorities had for a long time used various instruments of torture in their judicial proceedings. One of these, called *butuk*, figured on the table of "material evidences" in the court. It is a wooden instrument, composed of two sliding beams, which serve for screwing the feet of the culprit between them. These abominations were not unknown to the police. The matter was, however, only brought before the tribunal because the authorities arrested the wrong man, on whom they used the *butuk* with such cruelty that the victim was crippled for life.

The patience of our people is great ; too great, indeed, but not unlimited. Since the *uriadniks* have been introduced the number of so-called offences against officials in the execution of their

duty has considerably increased amongst the rural classes. The first official statistics bearing upon the subject show, for instance, that in 1877-81, in the district included under the St. Petersburg jurisdiction (embracing several provinces), the peasants form 93 per cent. of such offenders, whilst the privileged classes supply only 7 per cent. In the Kharkon region the former furnish 96 per cent., the latter only 4 per cent. in the rural districts, of such offences; all refer to the *uriadniks* or to the rural *stanovois*. Thus, to the lawlessness of the police must be accorded at least the merit of instructing our peasants a little in the art of taking the laws into their own hands, which may, perhaps, ultimately serve some useful purpose.

HARD TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

THE outcry for more land was the first sound the ears of educated Russians were able to catch, in the confused din of voices which rose from the masses below. Our *moujiks* were never tired of repeating the same requests again and again.

It was in vain that the Government, in order to satisfy their greed after land, offered them various cheap makeshifts. The *moujiks* displayed a stoical indifference to these advances, and went on endlessly repeating the same refrain about land.

What could be supposed to satisfy the peasants more than the condonation of the arrears in the taxes? or the reduction of one rouble per head of the annual land-purchase payments? But even to these offers the peasants turned a deaf ear. When spoken to about the condonation of the arrears, says Enghelhardt, they would answer: "The solvent payers will only regret their former punctuality—that is all. Condonation or

no condonation, those who have nothing can pay nothing. The present arrears condoned, fresh ones will be made next year, since they cannot pay." They will point to such and such villages which are not in arrears and are in no need of condonation, "because they were not wronged with regard to their land."

As regards the reduction of the land-purchase money, they showed the same wooden insensibility. "One rouble per head," they said, "mounts up to a large sum of money to the crown, but to us separately it is a trifle, hardly perceptible at all. We *moujiks* are quite ready to pay our dues, if only we can have more of our dear land."

The land is the object of the peasant's day-dreams and longings, as well as of a touching, almost filial respect and devotion. In the peasant's songs and in their ordinary speeches the usual epithet applied to it is "mother," or "little mother." The whole tenor of peasant life in Russia suggests the idea that the chief aim of their existence is to serve the land, and not to use it for their own advantage.

The Russian *moujiks* are, as a rule, quite unconcerned as to what is called "comfort." They

seem to consider a Spartan mode of life, and indifference to hardships, a good deal in the light of an attribute of man. In Eastern Russia and the Volga Provinces they scoff at their neighbours, the peasants of Tartar origin, who are fond of soft bedding and dainties, and who ride in long-shafted buggies, which rock them as a cradle might, instead of suffering their bowels to be jolted out in the traditional Russian *telegue*. I will not cite as an example the life of the poorer class of peasants. Amongst them privations are unavoidable. That which bears particularly on our present object is the life of such peasants as could afford to live quite comfortably if they chose.

If you enter the house of a notoriously rich peasant, whose granary is brimful of corn, who keeps half-a-dozen horses in his stables, and who has probably in some remote corner under the floor a jugful of bright silver roubles, laid aside against a rainy day, you will be surprised at the extreme simplicity, nay squalor, of his household arrangements. All peasants, the rich as well as the poor, live, with very few exceptions, in the same narrow peasant's *izba*; these homesteads presenting a square of fifteen to twenty

feet in length and width. Into this space, divided into one or two rooms, both children and grown-up people are all huddled together. The quantity of air afforded for respiration is so puzzlingly small that our hygienists are forced to admit the endosmical action of the walls as the only hypothesis which will account for the fact that these people are not literally suffocated.

“Furniture” is a word which can be used only in its broad philosophical sense when applied to the dwellings of these people. They really have no furniture beyond a big unpolished table of the simplest pattern, which stands in the place of honour, in a corner under the *ikons* or images of saints ; and some long wooden benches, about two feet deep, running all along the walls. These benches are used for sitting on in the daytime and for sleeping on at night. When the family is a large one, some of its members, at bed time, mount on to the upper tier of these shelves, which run all along the upper part of the wall, like hammocks in a ship’s cabin. Nothing bearing the likeness of a mattress is to be seen ; a few worn-out rugs are thinly spread over the bare wood of the benches or on the floor, and that is all. The everyday coat, just taken

off, serves as a blanket. Beds are a luxury hardly known, and very little appreciated by the Russian *moujiks*. Even in the peasants' hotels, the *dvors* on the chief commercial highways of the interior, frequented by the rich freight-carriers, a plentiful and luxurious table is kept, but nothing but bare benches in the way of beds are to be found. In the winter the large top of the stone oven is the favourite sleeping-place, and generally reserved for the elders, so that they may keep their old bones warm.

All the peasants dress in pretty much the same manner, which is extremely simple,—no undergarment; a shirt of homespun tick or of chintz, sometimes of red fustian—this last is very much appreciated—and light cotton or linen trousers. The richest wear boots, which are used by the poorer sort only on great occasions. The "bast" shoes, which were used in the middle ages in Europe, and have since disappeared, are in common use among the bulk of the Great Russian peasants. In the winter, a kind of home-made woollen boot is preferred, and the long woollen homespun coat is replaced by a sheepskin overcoat, by rich and poor alike. The peasants wear this fur dress the whole year round, rarely

taking it off unless when at work or asleep. Being so seldom changed, the peasants' clothes are not a model of cleanliness, but both men and women, as a rule, keep their bodies very clean. Every family which is not totally destitute has its hot steam-bath, where all wash, on the eve of every holiday, with great punctiliousness. The poorer amongst them, who have no bath of their own, use the family oven for this purpose, just after the removal of the coal. This is a real martyrdom, as the first sensation of a man unaccustomed to such exploits is that of being roasted alive.

As to the food, which forms the chief item of expenditure to people living in a simple way, and which presents the greatest scale of variation among peasant families, the allowance which has to be made for wealth is exceedingly modest.

Those peasant families which can be classed as rich or well-to-do use wholemeal bread and gruel all the year round, and eat it to satisfaction. But as long as they keep to the "peasant's state"—in other terms, as long as they are living from the land and tilling it with their own hands—the Russians do not depart from the chiefly vegetarian and extremely simple system of diet common to the average peasant. They eat meat

on Sundays, and occasionally on a week-day, never every day. It is a general maxim amongst all peasant households not to spend anything on themselves if they can help it that is not "home-made," home-grown, or reared on their own premises. As no family, living by husbandry alone, can rear on its own premises a sufficient number of cattle to supply it with meat every day, it, as a matter of course, adopts the above-mentioned custom.

It does not spring from stinginess. The same families, when moving to a town and engaged in business, spend just as much and live in just the same style as the well-to-do merchants and townspeople. But, so long as their ties to the land remain unbroken, the land is their first care. Very close-fisted in his household expenditure, the rich peasant will yet spend generously for the extension of his agriculture, the improvement of his working implements, or the augmentation of the number of his cattle. He expects a good return for his outlay, as the contrary would be proof of a blunder on his part. But money is not the only thing he has in view : he is heart-sick at the sight of bad crops, without in the least thinking of the possible

pecuniary losses. If quite well off he will none the less overwork himself at the hay-harvest, just as much as will the poorest man in the village.

There is, indeed, a good deal of unselfishness in the intense love borne by the peasants to the soil, which we townspeople, living in almost complete estrangement from nature, can hardly realise, but which is deep-rooted in the heart of every *moujik*—nay, of every husbandman—without distinction of nationality. The same feeling as that which inspires our peasants' poetry, breathes in the monologue of Alexander Iden, squire of Kent, overlooking his garden before John Cade drops in. Michelet, in his well-known prose poems, has sung the ardent love of the French peasant for his "mistress" the land.*

* I quote this beautiful passage as translated by John Stuart Mill (*Pol. Ec.*, p. 172).

"If we would know the inmost thought, the passion, of the French peasant, it is very easy. Let us walk out on Sunday into the country and follow him. . . . I perceive that he is going to visit his mistress.

"What mistress?—His land.

"I do not say he goes straight to it. No; he is free to-day, and may either go or not. Does he not go every day in the week? Accordingly, he turns aside, he goes another way, he has business elsewhere. And yet—he goes.

"It is true, he was passing close by; it was an opportunity. He looks, but apparently he will not go in; what for? And yet he enters.

Yet everything in men bears a national stamp, which reflects the historical and social peculiarities of their native countries. Alexander Iden—a man living amidst the turmoil of feudal struggles, who has found on his small estate a safe refuge, alike from the necessity of being an oppressor and the wretchedness of being oppressed—experiences in the fact of possession a quite different enjoyment from that of the peasant painted by Michelet, who, an owner above all things else, has recently come into the possession of a freehold estate into the bargain. It is yet another thing among our *moujiks*, with their perfect abhorrence of the idea of private property in land, and the peculiar agrarian arrangements which are the result of this objection.

“At least, it is probable that he will not work; he is in his Sunday dress: he has a clean shirt and blouse. Still there is no harm in plucking up this weed and throwing out that stone. There is a stump, too, which is in the way; but he has not his tools with him, he will do it to-morrow.

“Then he folds his arms and gazes, serious and careful. He gives a long, very long, look, and seems lost in thought. At last, if he thinks himself observed, if he sees a passer-by, he moves slowly away. Thirty paces off he stops, turns round, and casts on his land a last look, sombre and profound, but to those who can see it, the look is full of passion, of heart, of devotion.”—(*The People*, by J. Michelet),

There is no strip of land in Russia—save, perhaps, that whereon the peasant's house stands—which the peasant can call his own in the same sense as a continental peasant proprietor or English freeholder can claim land. To-day he holds one piece of land—by to-morrow a redistribution is voted for by the *mir*, and he receives another piece, which may be larger or may be smaller than the first, according as to whether his family has increased or decreased in number, but which certainly will lie in some other part—or better, parts—of the common field. We say parts because the families never receive their allotment of land in one whole block, but in a number of small plots and strips, scattered sometimes over ten, fifteen, or even more, localities, and changed every two or three years. This plan has its inconveniences; but the peasants prefer such an arrangement. It affords room for perfect fairness in the distribution of this most precious commodity—the land—which always presents great variety as to the quality of the soil, and its position with respect to the roads, the village, the water, etc.

Under such an arrangement there was no room for the development of the jealous and exclusive

passion of ownership, so characteristic of small holders, and little room indeed, if any, for attachment to the communal field as a whole, where each peasant wanders with his own plough and scythe. The cohesion between the men always proves stronger than their attachment to the soil.

Thus our peasants have no difficulty whatever in migrating to new places, provided they may start there on the same work and in the same mode of life which has proved itself congenial to them in their old homes. It may be said, without exaggeration, that most of the peasants in the thickly populated central provinces of Russia are permanently on the look-out for some new settlement. As a rule, before moving, the peasants send forward their explorers—the *khodoks*, or “pedestrians,” and await their report about the new country.

Not rarely it happens, however, that vague rumours about the fertility and abundance of free land in some far-distant province set dozens of villages in motion, which sell their goods, put what can be transported into cars, and start on their journey without any further inquiry, and generally end by paying dearly for their childish rashness. On the other hand, it must be

mentioned that in no case do the peasants migrate by isolated households, as do the American settlers in the West. A peasant never detaches himself, unless compelled by main force, from his village and his *mir*. Whether well pondered or not, the migrations are always made, either by whole villages or by parts of villages, considerable enough to form a new village commune, a new *mir*, at the new place. Of the many thousands of peasants who, on being compelled to abandon the plough-share for a time, find regular and tolerably remunerative employment in the towns, nine out of ten return to "their villages" and the hardships of a peasant's life so soon as they have amassed a sum of money sufficient for the purchase of a new instalment.

In our peasant's longing after land there is more of the love of a labourer for a certain kind of work which is congenial to him than of concrete attachment of an owner to a thing possessed. A *moujik* will survey with great complacency the furrow his plough and his faithful friend his horse have traced. At the sight of a golden corn-field his heart will be filled with exultant joy; he will delight, strong man as he is, in the powerful exertion of mowing. But to fallow land, the land

which is no more an active participator in agricultural labour, he will probably be quite indifferent. Certain it is, that he will not, like Michelet's peasant, covet such land with wistful, passionate eyes on his Sundays, when he has to abstain from working on it; nor would he, in going off, turn round to throw at his mistress "a look full of passion."

Moreover, if his neighbour has little land and a big family he will, at the *mir's* bidding, give up a part of his land for his neighbour's sake, without in the least feeling as if a part of his own flesh were cut from off his body.

It is not exactly the land, the given concrete piece of land, which a *moujik* loves—it is the mode of life which the possession of land allows him to live, and which blends into one inseparable whole both the work and the men in whose company he is accustomed to toil. This feeling, because it is less individualised and more complicated, is none the less intense; perhaps the reverse is rather the case. A Russian *moujik* probably feels much more grieved and down-hearted at being separated from his furrow than does a husbandman of any other nationality.

Uspensky, in one of the many sketches drawn

from life which we owe to his powerful pencil, has well caught this double characteristic of our peasants' longing after their land. In his "Ivan Afanasieff" he shows us a peasant in whom, as we shall see, this feeling developed to an almost morbid intensity, and the tragedy of whose life consists in the necessity for constantly violating it.

"Ivan Afanasieff, peasant of Slepoe Litvinovo, in the province of Novgorod, is a sterling example of a genuine husbandman, indissolubly bound to the soil both in mind and in heart. The land was in his conception his real foster-mother and benefactress, the source of all his joys and sorrows, and the object of his daily prayers and thanksgivings to God.

"Agricultural work, with its cares, anxieties, and pleasures, was so congenial to him, and filled up his inner life so completely, as to exclude even the idea that husbandry might be exchanged for something else—for another and more profitable employment. Though Ivan Afanasieff is by no means enamoured of the land, as the reader might have concluded, he is yet so closely united to it, and to all the mutations which the land undergoes in the course of the year, that he and the land are almost living as parts of the same whole.

“ Nevertheless, Ivan Afanasieff does not feel in the least like a bondsman, chained to the soil ; on the contrary, the union between the man and the object of his cares has nothing compulsory in it. It is free, and pure because springing spontaneously from the unmixed and evident good the land is bestowing on the man. Quite independently of any selfish incentive, the man begins to feel convinced that for this good received he must repay the land—his benefactress—with care and labour.

“ With these pure, conscientious principles to form the base of the whole existence of a genuine, unsophisticated peasant family, the germ of a wonderfully high moral standard of life might have been sown amongst them had they been allowed to thoroughly develop these fruitful ideals of free unconstrained union, based on the unshaken conviction that good must be earned by good. But alas ! though Ivan Afanasieff and his foster-mother—the land—are doing their respective duties with most scrupulous conscientiousness, times have come which seem to set no value on either the purity of these relations, or on the fact that they form the backbone of the moral strength of the whole Russian peasantry.

“ ‘Money!’ roar the new times, granting neither exemption nor respite. ‘But for pity’s sake! how can I leave the land?’ supplicates Ivan Afanasieff. ‘Suppose I go and seek some other employment for the sake of earning money, why then the land will be neglected, and we have lived all our lives by the land!’

“Ivan Afanasieff is so devoted to husbandry, is so genuine a *monjik*, that the highest salary he might obtain would not allay his craving after land, after the various sensations and appearances which surround the labours of the husbandman, and connect his soul and his mind with the sky and the earth, with the bright sun and the gorgeous dawns, with the storms and the rains, the snowdrifts, the frost, the thaw—with all God’s Creation, with all the wonders of God’s Universe.

“ ‘Money!’ roar the new times, and willing or not Ivan Afanasieff begins to struggle to scrape together some roubles?”

As Ivan Afanasieff had a horse, which, according to his own account, “though a poor, spare jade, dragged its feet along nevertheless,” and an uncle whom, by dint of prayers and supplications, he induced to lend him ten roubles for three months, he resolved to try his luck in trade,

He did not prove a success in this, his new calling, because he had not the hawker's stuff in him ; he was unable to swear that his wares had cost him three times as much as they had done, calling God and all the *ikons* of the Virgin Mary to witness to his truthfulness ; nor did he know any of the tricks by which to preserve himself from dangerous competition.

After a lot of trouble and much anxiety, Ivan Afanasieff was happy to be able to return what he had borrowed from his uncle. "From this time forth no—God forbid ! Never will I try commerce again. When I returned to my uncle the money he had lent, I felt relieved as from a heavy burden. No ! let us not meddle with this commerce. It is no business for us peasants."

The whole last ten years of Ivan Afanasieff's life is fraught with similar incidents. Being quite devoid of cunning and craft—for agricultural labour teaches no such lessons—Ivan Afanasieff fails in all enterprises which have money-making as their aim.

"A relative of his," we resume the quotation, "employed as a nurse in St. Petersburg, procured him a situation as a *dvomik* (porter) in a house. He spent all his money on his railway

ticket and arrived at St. Petersburg. But he was as frightened as a child at the sight of the ant-hill of 'strangers' which he beheld around him. He was frightened, too, at his dry, uninteresting work, done for the sake of money; he found it hard, too, to work, away from 'his own people.' He lost his place owing to his half-heartedness, and had to make his way home again on foot, penniless, begging in Christ's name, until, half-starved, he reached his native village, distant three hundred versts from the capital.

" 'Then I could repose at last to my heart's content,' he said. 'Leave all these places alone! Henceforth will I prefer to live on dry bread so long as it is in my own home.'

"On his return to his nest after every such absence, Ivan Afanasieff feels an almost childish joy, though he is always worse off than when he started. He is glad to have a crust of bread, provided it is home-made, and that he is allowed to live amidst his own home surroundings, and with people whom he knows and loves.

" 'Money, money!' roar the new times, and Ivan Afanasieff, who has none, is entrapped once more in some financial enterprise. He is engaged to dig a canal near Lake Ladoga. They give him

ten roubles in advance, and promise more, besides board and lodging. Ivan Afanasieff could not but accept; but lo! at the close of some six months he returns home again without money, without health, without clothes. It turned out that he and his companions had to sleep on the snow, that they were fed on carrion, and cheated most shamefully as to wages; that a multitude died from various diseases, and were buried in hot haste anywhere. After having passed through all these ordeals and seen the heart-sickening sufferings of others, Ivan Afanasieff is glad to run away, with his passport as his sole remuneration. And how pleased he is with his thatched roof, his big stove, and his diluted acidulous 'home-made' *kvass*!

"However exhausted and toil-worn he may be, the life in 'his country,' and especially the return 'to the peasant state' and to agricultural labour, speedily wipe out all traces of illness, of sorrow, and indignation from his face, which once more looks calm, noble, benevolent." — (*Uspensky*, Vol. vii.)

CHAPTER II.

No greater misfortune can befall a peasant than to become a landless *batrak*, compelled to hire himself out to landlords or to his rich fellow peasants. The *moujiks* make, indeed, but a slight distinction between the state of a slave and that of a hireling. "To hire yourself out is to sell yourself," they say ; and they feel the same abhorrence for the state of a hireling as a freeman feels for the state of slavery. There is no name more opprobrious for a peasant than that of *batrak*.

"Oh, they live in clover," these *hen poachers* (popular *sobriquet* for the policemen) said to Engelhardt a *moujik* friend of his, a genuine, passionate husbandman of enormous physical strength, and cleverness and ability in the management of his farm.

"Why, would you take such a place yourself?"

"I take such a place?"

"Yes."

"No, God forbid! I would not be a *batrak*."

Another day several peasants from a neighbouring village came to his stores to buy some bushels of corn.

"Why do you not buy it from your landlord?" he asked.

"Our landlord!" they exclaimed. "What kind of corn can you expect him to have when he is a *batrak* himself?"

"And what contempt there was in these words!" adds Engkelhardt. The landlord being a poor man served as steward to the estates of his rich neighbour.

It must be observed, however, that these same *moujiks* never neglect an opportunity of turning an honest penny by their labour, if it in no way implies permanent dependence. Even the rich *moujiks*, who have plenty of food and everything they require in their homes, after they have harvested their own crops, and during the winter months, when there is no field work, most willingly accept any work they can get on the landlord's fields or farms. They do not in the least consider it to be derogatory, nor would they call themselves on that account either *batraks* or "hire-

lings." They hate permanent engagements only as implying dependence on the pleasure of a master, because a *moujik*, even though he be poor,—provided he lives by the labour of his hands, on his own bit of land, without applying to anybody for assistance,—is an independent, self-confident man, enjoying his ample share of human dignity and self-respect.

It stands to reason that the ideas of personal dignity held by our *moujiks* are not the same as those held by the people of the civilised countries of Europe. When meeting a "gentleman" or an official, no matter of what grade, the peasant will take off his hat and stand bareheaded when spoken to. If anxious to express extreme gratitude to any one, he may perchance bow down to the ground, as grown-up children bowed to their parents in the families of the middle classes up to the present generation. The *moujiks* do not consider any of these acts to be humiliating, holding still in this respect to the same standards of ideas as have prevailed in all countries, modern and ancient, when just emerging from the patriarchal state. Yet they possess in a high degree one qualification which in all centuries and in all lands has constituted the very essence of human

dignity—they are truthful. There is neither falsehood nor deceit in their lives. In their families, and in all their mutual relations, everything is clear, genuine, frank; this is true, even as regards egotism and brutal oppression. There is much harshness in the everyday life of the peasant, but millions of our people have lived from generation to generation without knowing or suffering a lie.

“That which struck me most,” says Enghelhardt, “when I was listening to the peasant’s discussions at the village meetings, was the freedom of speech the *moujiks* granted to themselves. *We*” (he means the well-to-do, the upper classes), “when discussing anything, always look suspiciously around, hesitating whether such or such things may safely be uttered or not, trembling lest we should be collared and taken before some one in authority. As to the *moujik*, he fears nothing; publicly, in the street, before the whole village, he discusses all kinds of political and social questions, always freely and frankly speaking his mind about everything. A *moujik*, ‘when not in disgrace with his landlord or with the Tzar,’ which means that he has paid all his taxes to both, is afraid of nobody. . . . He may stand bare-

headed before you; but you feel that you have to deal with an independent, plainspoken man, who is not at all inclined to be obsequious to you or to take his tone from you.”

Rural Russia fought bravely and pluckily for the preservation and freedom of its husbandmen, endeared to it for so many reasons.

From the first, however, it was quite evident that all the odds were absolutely against the peasants. With plots of land so small that the best-conditioned half of our rural population (originally “State peasants”) could only win from them sufficient to supply one-half of their yearly income, whilst their poorer brethren (former serfs) could only gain from one-fifth to one-third of the amount absolutely needed for food and taxes; with a burden of taxes for the State peasants equal in amount to 92·75 of the entire value of the annual produce of their allotments, and for the former serfs about double that proportion—198·25,—I say, that with such an arrangement as this, for the peasants to live on the profits of their land was an arithmetical impossibility.

The State peasants had to provide, as we have seen, for about 40% of their annual expenditure by some other means, whilst the former serfs had to

find, some two-thirds, others four-fifths, of their yearly income from outside sources. In cases where this is found to be feasible, the taxes imposed on them would absorb, as we have seen in a former chapter, about one-half (45%) of the yearly gains of the people on their land and elsewhere, kindly leaving for their subsistence the larger half (55%). This is practically a permanent *corvée* of about three days a week paid in money. To call this a "tax" is a flagrant abuse of the term ; but our peasants would not quibble about that, for these *moujiks* are wonderfully ready tax-payers.

They would freely give up three days of their week without a murmur, or so much as asking for an account, and would go merrily on their way with the remaining three, if only they might employ them also on the land. In other words, if they had their plots of land enlarged, so as to be able to draw from them the whole of their exceedingly modest revenue, they would be content. As, however, their bitter outcry for more land was never listened to, they have had to make the best shift they could. With their peculiar adaptability, which never despairs and which puts a good face upon all difficulties that cannot be avoided, they left no stone unturned in the endeavour to make both

ends meet. They applied for whatever work they could hope to get, and adapted themselves to any they could find : in the factories, at the railways, at the wharves, in the thousands of petty trades which congregate in towns.

The whole of the peasantry being in extreme need of extra earnings, it is a difficult matter to find employment for all in a non-industrial country like Russia. Every trade is overcrowded.

The sums realised by " outside " (*i.e.*, non-agricultural) employments are very considerable. In the Provinces of Novgorod one-third of the peasants are permanently engaged in various outside industries, their wages amounting to about nine and a half millions of roubles a year, whilst from their land they receive only two and a half millions. Out of this total of twelve millions the Novgorod *moujiks* pay 65 per cent. in taxes. In the Province of Yaroslav, where about half of the whole population is engaged in outside employments, the non-agricultural revenue brings in eleven and a half millions of roubles a year ; in the districts of the Province of Tver the peasants earn on an average about eight roubles a head by extra work, or about one and a half millions a year.

The losses, too, are enormous, especially in the

agricultural branches of the "migratory employments"—the most important of all. There is neither system nor order; and there can be none in these wholesale wanderings of people in search of employment.

The peasants of the Province of Viatka rush to Samara, whilst those of Samara try their luck in Viatka, and both Samara and Viatka send batches of their men to the Black Sea steppes, which return them a Roland for their Oliver. The travelling expenses, and the losses occasioned by the hundreds of thousands of failures, amount to scores of millions of roubles every year, and are a direct loss in the popular economy, acting on the peasants as a dead weight, which drags them downhill.

To atone for these constant and unavoidable losses our people have but one expedient—increase of work. They have reduced to the extreme limit the number of able-bodied labourers kept on the land so as to set a greater number free for the chances of "outside earnings."

The petty trades carried on by artisans, who work at home—*kustary*—have flourished from of old in the villages of Great Russia, as a supplement to agricultural work.

At the present day the hard exigencies of commerce have gradually compelled a considerable number of these artisans—husbandmen—to give up husbandry altogether and to devote themselves exclusively to their trade. But the bulk of them are still tillers of the soil, dedicating only the winter months to their trade. They make all kinds of goods which do not require expensive machinery for their manufacture: earthen, steel, iron, leathern wares, woollen, cotton, and linen stuffs, carts and harness, hats, furniture, mats, carpets, lithographs and *ikons*, ropes, musical instruments, candles, soap, glass, beads, bronze, and silver finger and ear rings; they bring up singing birds, they knit laces, they hew grindstones,—they do everything which a ready mind, coupled with a hungry stomach, can suggest. Invention and ability make good the extreme deficiency of tools, as well as the complete absence of any assistance from scientific technology.

In the finest specimens of these wares the workmanship is brought to remarkable perfection.

The Inquiry Commission mentions that most of the goods of some of the best commercial houses of Moscow, trading in Parisian silk hats and Viennese furniture, are manufactured by these

kustary peasants in their villages. The Podolsk laces, and the linen of Kostroma, belong to the best specimens of these articles. The crushing competition of large factories working with machinery, and the swarms of usurious jobbers, have together, by steadily cheapening the products, driven these small artisans to lengthen their hours of labour to a frightful extent.

Amongst weavers, lace-makers, rope-twisters, fur-dressers, and locksmiths, it is a common thing for men to work for seventeen hours a day ; sometimes more.

The mat-makers—an extensive trade, by the way, carried on in four hundred villages of twenty-six provinces, and returning two millions of roubles yearly—have to work such appallingly long hours that they invented a sort of relay system which, as far as we know, is quite unique of its kind. They sleep three times in the twenty-four hours at about equal intervals : first at dark, until 10 P.M., when they awaken for their night's work ; then after the early breakfast at dawn, and again after the dinner-hour. As they work, eat, and sleep in the same dusty workshop, and certainly fall asleep as soon as they drop on the floor, they contrive to squeeze out of themselves nineteen hours of work

a day, and sometimes twenty-one! "When the work is very pressing," says the report of the Commission, "the mat-makers do not sleep more than three hours"—one hour at a time.

Among all these trades, in which millions of people—men, women, and small children—are engaged, there are few in which the working time is less than sixteen hours a day. The result of all this fearful toil, which absorbs every hour unoccupied by field labour—*i.e.*, the whole of the winter and part of the autumn—is, that they barely manage to pay their taxes, and do not starve. This is what is meant by "peasants making both ends meet."

After such horrors, field labour may well assume the guise of recreation. Yet the peasants when ploughing "at their leisure," because this is not pressing work, rise before the sun and do not go to rest until it is dark, reposing but for a short time during our very long northern day. As to the harvest-time, it is not without cause that in our peasants' idiom it is called *strada*, or "sufferance."

Strange! the medical inspectors say, about most of our factories, that the hygienic conditions under which the "hands" work are so bad, and the

hours so long, that the only thing which prevents their being slaughtered in a mass is the fact that they return to their villages for the summer months, and are there able to recuperate their strength. Exactly the same conclusion was come to by the Commissioners concerning many of the *kustary* mat-makers, fur-dressers, and others: they are able to go on, solely because it is only during the winter months that they work under such fearful pressure, and till their plots of land in the summer.

At the same time all those who have written about Russian village life—nay, all who have ever spent a few holiday months in a Russian village—know that it is difficult to conceive of more exhausting work than that which is performed by the peasants during the “sufferance time.”

When mowing the hay (on their own land, of course) the peasants do not allow themselves more than six hours’ rest out of the twenty-four. Towards the close of the harvest season the peasant gets thin, and his face grows dark and emaciated from overwork. “They get so exhausted that, if the fine weather lasts for a long time, the peasant will in his secret heart pray to God for rain, that he may have a day of rest. In fine

weather the peasant, however weary, will never desist from his labours. He would feel ashamed.' (Engelhardt.)

'Of course I do not say this as disproving the surgeon's opinion as to the strengthening effects of agricultural labour. Certainly it is the healthiest of all occupations, provided only that the labourer has food enough to make up for the great physical exertions this work entails. I only wish to show that our peasants do not spare themselves, either behind the *kustar's* stand and the factory loom, or on their land; that their capacity for work is at least equal to their power of endurance; and that they really do their utmost in the terrible struggle for life and independence which they have been waging under such unfavourable conditions for the last twenty-six years. .

It cannot be said of them that they have won the battle; yet neither are they defeated. Certainly they have saved their "honour" and something more.

The bulk of our peasantry, that is to say, about two-thirds of it, have preserved the land and the position of independent husbandmen to which they are so passionately attached; and for its possession they continue to pay, in some cases, the

whole, in others twice the value of what it yields in taxes, twisting themselves with miraculous dexterity out of the clutches of usury, and from under the hammer of the tax-collector. But in spite of this they are gradually giving way. Slowly, it is true, obstinately defending every inch of the ground; sometimes retrieving in a good year that which they lost in a bad one; but, on the whole, losing their foothold unmistakably, fatally.

Those frightful figures, showing the increase of general mortality, are there in all their barren eloquence to attest this fact. The Government returns regarding recruits prove that insufficiency of food, combined with over-work, begins to produce its baleful effect on the health of the rising generation. The peasantry, as a whole, lives in greater want than it lived ten—nay, fifteen years ago.

The scientific study of the daily fare of ordinary peasants—which means those who are rather badly off—would, in all probability, prove a no less puzzling problem than to calculate the average quantity of respirable air inhaled by each, and would inspire a high opinion as to the marvellous adjustability of the human stomach.

When in 1878 some people brought samples of bread from the Province of Samara, nobody in the Geographical Society would believe that it was intended for the consumption of man. It looked like a brownish, sandy coal of inferior quality, or like dried manure; and it fell to pieces when pressed between the fingers, so great was the quantity of non-nutritive ingredients mixed with the flour. This, of course, is exceptional; but the average peasant family in our villages leads a life of privation and fasting, which would do honour to a convent of Trappists. They hardly ever taste meat. Whole-meal rye bread, and whole buckwheat, and gruel made of grits, are dainties which they only taste during the few months, sometimes weeks, which immediately follow the harvest.

Children from these families, when placed in situations in town as domestic servants, in well-to-do households, at first literally over-eat themselves on ordinary sifted rye bread, as other children might do on cakes.

In the prisons the convicts banter and tease one another. "You rogue, you! Look how you have fattened on the Crown's *chistiak*!" which means whole-meal bread; because in the prisons

rye bread, though of inferior quality, is dealt out without any extraneous admixture, whilst the ordinary run of villagers, during eight months out of the twelve, eat bread mixed with husks, pounded straw, or birch bark.

It is when reduced to such extremities as these that the peasant "puts himself in harness," to use the *moujiks'* colloquial term, for applying to the ruinous assistance of the local usurer. He cannot help it if his children cry for bread. "They are not like cattle, the children," said one peasant, apologising for his insolvency. "You cannot cut their throats and eat them when there is no forage for them. Willing or unwilling, you must feed them." And the peasant then steps on to the slippery declivity, at the foot of which yawns the abyss of misery and degradation, which is summed up for our rural population in the one word "*batrak*." A whole third of our peasantry has slipped down this descent since 1861, and is now at the bottom. There are twenty millions of landless rural proletarians in modern Russia. Among the remaining forty millions, who still hold their land, there are yet other millions who will join the ranks of the ruined to-morrow if not to-day. Here is an extract from the reports of

a Commission of Inquiry, giving a detailed and graphic account of the economical position of such peasants as are on the high road to become *batraks*, though nominally they are still landholders. I translate literally, in the endeavour to preserve the ingenuous tone and style of the original.

“*Pankrat Horev* and wife have a family of six daughters and one son, all under age. He is the only full-grown workman in the house. He pays taxes for two souls—*i.e.*, two shares of land. His property : ‘one cow, one horse,’ two sheep.’ Their means of subsistence : ‘know no trade. Have ground thèir last sack of oats.’

“*Ivan Jdanov*. Family of five people, with one full-grown workman. His property : one cow, one horse, one sheep. ‘Means of subsistence : ‘no bread since the autumn. Begs with his children. In order to pay off the second instalment of his taxes has sold his hay.’

“*Fedor Kazakovzev*. Family of six people, with one full-grown workman. Pays for one and a half souls (share of land). His property : one cow ; no horse. Means of subsistence : no trade, goes begging. To pay the taxes has sold his stable.

“*Emelian Jdanov*. A family of ten people, of which only one is a full-grown workman. Pays for one and a half souls. His property : no cow, no horse, the house in ruins—uninhabitable. Means of subsistence : begging. To pay the taxes has sold his last horse.

“*Efrem Tarasov*. A family of six people, with one full-grown workman. Pays for two souls. His property : one horse, old and lean, one sheep. Means of subsistence : no bread, are begging.

“*Evsignei Usskov* has a family of six. Pays for two souls. His property : one horse, one calf. Means of subsistence : are eating their last oat bread. To pay the taxes has sold his pig.

“*Procl Jdanov*. A family of seven people, with only one full-grown workman. Pays for three souls. His property : one horse. Means of subsistence : to pay the taxes has sold his house ; to buy bread, his cow. This they have already eaten, and now are begging.

“*Andreian Zauschnitzin*. A family of seven people, with one full-grown workman. Pays for two souls. His property : no horse, no cow, two sheep. Means of subsistence : to pay the taxes has sold his horse and his cow. No bread, are begging. And so forth, and so forth. . . . ’

("Records of the Zemstvo of Orloff District in the Province of Viatka," 1875, page 254).

For peasants in such an evil plight, whose name is legion, to be converted into downright *batraks* would be to a certain extent a deliverance. They would no longer be worried about the taxes, and their position would be clear once and for ever. That which makes them cleave so tenaciously to the land is the hope, but rarely realised, that "perhaps" by some lucky chance they may be able to struggle through their present straits, rear their children, and then, when the household numbers several workmen, all will be well again, and they become "real *moujiks*" once more.

Hundreds of thousands of peasants, when once compelled to resign the land, leave the country altogether, swelling the masses of our town proletarians, paupers, and tramps. The bulk of the landless peasants do not, however, leave their native villages. They seek employment as *batraks* in the village or neighbourhood, and wander as day labourers from one master to another. Their families live in the village, in the *izba* (cottage) they have retained, and to which the father returns when out of employment.

If the commune is not very hard up, no taxes or duties are imposed on these *bobyls* and *bobylkas*, as the male and female landless householders are called. In such communes as are in distressed circumstances, and which cannot afford to exempt any, they have to bear their share of the common burdens, such as the digging of wells, the construction of bridges, or, if they keep any cattle themselves, the hiring of the communal shepherd.

But, whether they pay anything or not, whether they work or beg, the *bobyls* and *bobylkas* retain their full voice in public affairs and their place at the communal meetings of the *mir*. There is not a single case on record of any attempt on the part of a *mir* to curtail these rights, which, in their opinion, is due to manhood and not to property. It is not, however, to this class, which is so absolutely dependent on the *koulaks*, and so easily cowed by them, that the *mir* can look for an active support in its struggle for freedom against its chief enemies and oppressors.

There are few rural districts which enjoy real and genuine self-government. In most of them the Government appointments are monopolised by *koulaks* and *mir*-eaters pure and simple. An honest peasant, a *mir*'s man, anxious to protect the *mir*'s

interests against the village *koulaks* as well as the police superintendents, stands but a poor chance against one of the *koulaks*, supported, as they are, by the police and local administration. To obtain the post of *starshina* for their own man, or to overthrow some notorious swindler hated by all, who may chance to fill it for the time being, the peasants have to resort to no end of canvassing, agitation, and diplomacy, in order to detach from the *koulak* who opposes them some influential supporter of his own set, to inspire the timid with courage, and persuade them to firmly resist the threats of the "*stanovoi*," the "*ispravnik*," and the "*member*."

More often than not these efforts are not crowned with success, and hence the fact that there are few districts in which there is no underhand contest going on between the commonalty and the board of officials. But in a prosperous and truly agricultural commune—which is tantamount to saying in a strongly united commune—the *koulak*, even when accepted as the head of the administration, will think twice before committing a gross injury to a member of the *mir*, or before plunging his grasping hand too deeply into the communal cash-box. For a flourishing

agricultural commune, not in "arrear" with its taxes, even the police has no overpowering terrors, and the *mir* grows very obstinate when provoked beyond a certain limit.

We gaze on another picture when we look at poor half-ruined villages, swamped by "arrears," overcrowded by *bobylys* indebted almost to a man to the *koulak*, and dependent on his kindness and mercy. Here the *koulak* reigns supreme. Whether in office or not he is absolute master of the position, because he is able to sway the *mir's* vote at his pleasure. Both elders and judges, who among other powers have the right to inflict corporal punishment on the peasants of their district, are the tools, friends, dependents, obedient to his biddings. In such communities the *koulaks* verily are absolute masters. The very vastness of the powers wielded by the *mir* makes it extremely dangerous to resist the *koulak*; should there be no rivalry among the set, almost impossible.

Thus are the *koulaks* not merely instrumental in the material ruin of our peasantry; they are the chief agents in the demoralisation and perversion of our people's public spirit, and of those democratic communal institutions which first fostered

it. At the same time the *koulaks* serve as a channel by which the demoralising influences, which come from the police and the administration, are infiltrated into the hearts of the villages.

CHAPTER III.

BETWEEN these two classes—the rural proletarians on the one hand and the rural plutocracy on the other—stands a third, that of the “grey” *moujik*. In their ranks we place all peasants who, without being necessarily free from debt to the *koulak* or to the State, have, nevertheless, preserved their land, their agricultural implements, and their cattle in good working condition, so as to have a reasonable hope of retrieving their position within an appreciable time. Excluding all such merely nominal land-holders, who have no cattle wherewith to till their land, we shall still find this to be a sufficiently numerous class. At the present time it counts among its numbers certainly more than one-half of our rural population, though it is constantly on the decrease. The upper stratum melts into the rural plutocracy, the lower swells the ranks of rural proletarians.

This is the class which forms the backbone

of Russian strength ; it intervenes between the State and bankruptcy ; it upholds the great popular principles of social and economical life, and struggles undaunted against the police and the tax-gatherer ; it withstands the heavy pressure of the rural plutocracy ; it resists the downward influence of the proletariats.

It must be in fairness admitted that in defending their political and social principles our peasants, the "grey *moujiks*" at their head, have shown the same tenacity and obstinacy as they showed in the protection of their favourite economical status. Indeed, they have succeeded in 'preserving in' absolute integrity, the fundamental axiom that there shall be no such thing as personal proprietorship in land or in any other source of wealth which is provided by nature. Notwithstanding the many influences working in an opposite direction, they still hold, with a few unimportant exceptions, to the principle that a man has a right of ownership in a thing only in so much and in so far as it embodies his labour. In politics they stick to the idea of the supreme authority of the *mir* and of the perfect equality of its members, considering the many violations of these principles as abuses ; and

against them the popular conscience never ceases to protest.

There is certainly a far greater uniformity in the popular mind as to these two fundamental points than might have been anticipated from the diversity in the social condition of the people.

The very *koulaks* and *mir*-eaters who misapply them to their own ends will generally recognise them in the abstract. That which in our social organisation had become damaged, vitiated, corrupted, is the interior relations between the members of the commune, affecting the opinions held as to a man's moral conduct and his obligations towards his fellow men. This ideal of "unity," then, which we have endeavoured to set forth in one of our former chapters, was the natural outcome of the material and social equilibrium existing at one time in Russia, but which is now gradually disappearing from our village communities.

The village in its natural state—as it was in bygone days, and could yet be under a more rational agrarian arrangement—may be best described as an association of labourers, amongst whom there are no conflicting interests to check or mar that sentiment of mutual good-will which is inherent

in all men as social beings. Friendliness amongst these peasants was assured by their not being in any sense competitors: that which in other branches of industry can be attained only by means of a complicated social arrangement is obtained in agriculture by itself. I mean independence of the market. Each lives by the fruit of his labour, not from the profits he might or might not get by selling to somebody else. Two husbandmen tilling their fields side by side are not rivals, unless in the noble and artistic emulation that may be felt by two labourers delighting in their work. The failure of the one can in no way be considered by the other as a windfall for himself. Nor could one feel grieved, or in the least alarmed, if the other, being stronger or abler, or simply luckier, earned more.

Differences in wealth always existed among our peasants. In each village there have always been rich families, poor families, and those of moderate means, a difference regulated by their respective ability and industry, and particularly by the number and age of the members which formed each household. Large families, composed of five, six, and even more full-grown workers, and "rich families" are synonymous terms even

now. But as for every pair of willing hands there was land waiting to be tilled, a diligent peasant could well afford to be indifferent to the question as to how many silver coins his neighbour had hidden away in his strong-box. He was in no need of it; and in the next generation the chances of birth and death might make his family a large one, and make him in his turn a "rich" man. Labour was the certain source of prosperity and independence. It was also an all-sufficient ground for self-respect and for considerate treatment from his fellow-men. Labour became, to a certain extent, sanctified in the eyes of the people.

"God loves labour," say our people, though nowadays there are few who attach more significance to these words than to many other virtuous precepts handed down by popular tradition. Men belonging to the type of unselfish workers are rare in our time. Lukian, for example, "the *batrak* of Ivan Ermolaëff, with whom even his exacting master was satisfied, was an exceptional man." He believed labour to be meritorious before the face of God. "God loves labour," he often said, and believed it firmly. With a view to future beatitude, he moved logs and

carried beams, rolled stones, and over-taxed his strength over the most back-breaking efforts, not only without a grumble or any feelings of spite, but with an unshaken belief that all this was agreeable to God. "He likes it!" said Lukian, whilst, red as a turkey cock and dripping with perspiration, he was pulling up an enormous stake sticking in the bed of the river under the direction of Ivan Ermolaeff. He was all wet, he was sighing and groaning from the strain; but God saw these efforts and approved of Lukian. The stake creaked and splashed as it was pulled out of the deep mire of the river's channel, and Lukian then knew for certain that "God had seen his efforts and had added a new mark to the many he had already gained by his labours."

In losing the power to secure the satisfaction of the people's needs, labour lost much of its dignity, scope, and attractiveness. The only thing which is appreciated now, and which alone can secure to the peasant peace, safety, and respect, is money. But from daily observation and experience he soon learns that money cannot be viewed in the same light as the product of the land. The people who succeed in making the most money are not always those who work the

hardest, but in many cases those who do not work at all, and are only the more respected for being idle, both in the wide world outside, of which the *moujik* catches occasional glimpses, and in the village where he lives. The *koulak*, whose motto is "Only fools work," is certainly the man whose position is the most enviable. Nobody would dare to lay a finger on him. To him not only the small fry—*starshina*, *pissars*, *uriadniks*—but the *stanovoi* himself are kind and considerate. The "grey" *moujik* cannot help feeling tired and disgusted with his eternal drudgery over his "cat's plot," which brings him in such a pittance. He also longs to be safe, and not to live in momentary dread of a flogging; he, too, wishes to be respected, and would not in the least object to being courted. The greed for money now permeates the whole rural population; they all join in the mad chase after roubles, a chase which moreover diminishes their attachment both to the land and to the village.

On the land a household works together; the product is the result of common labour, and is considered as common property. The *mir* as a whole plays an all-important part in the cycle of agricultural life, as guardian of the land, meadows,

and forests, controlling their fair distribution amongst the people, and directing the common work. When making money in towns, everybody depends on his own personal ability and industry. The village does not in any way assist or protect him, and the household very rarely does. His duties towards the *mir* become a burden to him, and he is much tempted to resent the constant drain on his resources made by his own relatives.

This is one of the chief causes of the breaking up of the large patriarchal families, which flourished among the Russian peasants in olden times. "The Gorshkovs," says Uspensky, "were one of the richest and largest families in Slepoe Litvinovo; in proof of which I may state, that up to the present moment they have always lived under the same roof. I called on them pretty often; and whatever the hour of my visits—early morning or mid-day or evening—I invariably found all the members of the family not engaged upon some work—men, women, and children—seated round a big *samovar* sipping their weak tea. They always asked me to partake of their refreshment, and they were exceedingly polite and obliging; but, nevertheless, I did not feel at my ease among

them. In the mutual relations of the members of the family there was a certain constraint and insincerity. It seemed not only as if I were a stranger amongst them, but that they were all strangers to one another. When I became better acquainted with this family, and with the general conditions of peasant life, I was convinced that my presentiments had not deceived me. There was deep-seated, internal discord in the family, which was only held together partly by the skill of the clever and robust old grandmother, whom all were accustomed to obey, and especially by the unwillingness of each one 'to be the first to begin the row.' It seemed as though each one expected that one of the others should be the first to 'rebel.'

"This discord was of ancient date. It had been worming itself gradually into the heart of the family almost ever since the time when the necessity for earning something extra first became manifest. One of the brothers went to St. Petersburg during the winter months as a cabman, whilst another engaged himself as a forester ; but the inequality of their earnings had disturbed the economical harmony of the household. In five months the cabman sent one hundred roubles

home to the family, whilst the forester had only earned twenty-five roubles. Now, the question was, Why should he (the forester) consume with such avidity the tea and sugar dearly purchased with the cabman's money? And in general: Why should this tea be absorbed with such greediness by all the numerous members of the household—by the elder brother, for instance, who alone drank something like eighty cups a day (the whole family consumed about nine hundred cups per diem), whilst he did not move a finger towards earning all this tea and sugar? Whilst the cabman was freezing in the cold night air, or busying himself with some drunken passenger, or was being abused and beaten by a policeman on duty near some theatre, this elder brother was comfortably stretched upon his belly, on the warm family oven, pouring out some nonsense about twenty-seven bears whom he had seen rambling through the country with their whelps, in search of new land for settlement. True his (the cabman's) children were fed in the family whilst he was in town; in the summer he was, however, at home, and worked upon their common land with the rest. His children had a right to their bread. The only thing which made him tolerate his dependency

was that the horse and the carriage, which he drove when in town, had been purchased out of the common funds. But his endurance did not promise to hold out much longer.

“For two years he had kept silence; but his people were well aware that he tried to ‘conceal’ a part of his earnings, so that his contribution towards the family income should be pretty much the same as that furnished by the other brothers. When his daughter, a little girl, succeeded in earning fifteen roubles for the family by selling wood-berries, he tried to deduct that amount from his cabman’s fees for his own private use. The grandmother would not, however, permit this. .

“The next brother (the forester) also began to ponder and to calculate as to how much of his money was ‘engrossed’ by the eldest brother and his children. A dress for Paranka had been purchased from a pedlar with his money. Now, Paranka was the eldest brother’s daughter, and able to earn fifty roubles at work among the osiers, which she appropriated to her own private uses. The forester was very vexed and irritated about the dress bought of the pedlar. As the grandmother took Paranka’s side in the dispute, Alexis

(the forester) took his next month's salary to the public-house and spent it all in drink.

"It is impossible to describe all these domestic dissensions. The notions as to 'mine' and 'yours,' which disturbed these people's peace of mind, were felt in every trifle—in every lump of sugar, cup of tea, or cotton handkerchief. Nicolas (the cabman) looked at Alexis, thinking, 'You are eating of that which is mine,' conscious, all the while, that at times he, too, had eaten of something belonging to his younger brothers. Alexis, in his turn, could not feel himself quite at his ease. It was all very well for him to hiccough freely after drenching himself with as much tea as he could hold, in sign of his being well pleased and satisfied with himself, after having partaken of tea which was his own, but he was not sincere. A misgiving lurked in his heart, that either in this tea, or in that sugar, or in the white bread, or—which was most certain, and by far the most disagreeable of all—in his own stomach, there was something belonging to somebody else.

"It was exactly this 'mine, thine,' peeping out from every mouthful and from every gulp, which drove me from the Gorshkovs' table, all their obliging invitations to take a cup of tea with them

notwithstanding. They drank their tea solemnly and silently, looking steadily into their cups ; but it always seemed to me, that they were all trying to drink the same quantity, noting, under the rose, whether any one had out-eaten or out-drunk the others.

“ At all events, the sidelong glances they threw upon one another and the children were very bad looks indeed. It was the same in everything. If you hired some horses of one of the brothers for a drive into town, the others, on meeting you, would try to find out how much you had paid him. If you paid one of the brothers his fees the others were sure to stare at your purse and at their brother's hands. Of course such relations could not be maintained for long.

“ It so happened that the first to rebel was Paranka. She took it into her head that she could not do without a regular woollen, town-made dress. All the men resisted this whim, for about eighteen months, with resolute energy. A million of times, at least, it was proved to them by the grandmother and the other women, as well as by Paranka herself, who wept bitterly through a number of winter evenings, that no less than a hundred roubles of Paranka's money had been

spent upon the family. The men resisted with a truly bull-like stubbornness. Finally, the grandmother herself began to wail, and then the men gave way, and it was resolved that a dress should be made.

“The eldest brother was commissioned to inquire about the prices and everything appertaining to the matter. He resolved to go to the next port, distant about fifteen miles, and to make his inquiries there. He took a provision of oats and hay for the horses, spent two days on the trip, and, having consulted with the smith, the farrier, and several merchants, returned home not one whit the wiser. He did not know how to broach the subject. In order not to allow the brothers to cool down, Paranka had begun to wail incessantly from the very day the resolution as to her dress had been passed at the family council. By dint of these tears she moved the reluctant men to take active steps. The two next brothers put horses into the cart and also went to the port, for there was a saw-mill there, and, in consequence, a large number of people. They were no more fortunate than the elder brother, and came home with the conviction that the women must be sent, for Paranka gave them no peace with her wailings.

The women went and returned perfectly horrified : nobody would think of making a dress such as Paranka wanted for less than forty roubles. Here all the brothers, their wives, and even Paranka herself, seemed to understand that the matter was at an end ; but God saved Paranka. A soldier who happened to be at the port heard about the inquiries of the Gorshkov women, and sent word to the headquarters of a cavalry regiment stationed near Novgorod, some thirty miles off. At these headquarters there was a dressmaker who, profiting by a lucky chance (an officer was transporting a piano to St. Petersburg), begged permission from the carrier to accompany him, and thus arrived at Paranka's village sitting upon the piano. She persuaded the family that all could be well and cheaply arranged.

“ But when the brothers counted up everything that had been spent on the dressmaker during the six weeks that she stitched and unstitched the dress, they found that it represented a sum equal in value to the framework of two peasants' houses.

“ The dressmaker stole some pieces of stuff, and they had to incur extra expense in recovering them. And worst of all the dress was quite unwearable. Later on, thanks to unremitting toil,

and particularly to 'concealment' of money, Paranka succeeding in paying herself for a silk dress by a Novgorod dressmaker, besides a jacket and a paletot. All these treasures she kept hidden in the house of a friend.

"The next after Paranka to squabble was Nicolas, the cabman. He began to urge that he had long since redeemed the carriage and the horse; but the first to break away from the family, and to separate in real earnest, was Alexis, the forester, probably because he felt more sincerely and oftener than the others did the burden of being indebted to others. That part of his own earnings which he considered to be an extra he faithfully spent in drink, that it might fall to nobody's share; he did not, like Nicolas, secrete it. When sober, however, he could not help feeling that he at times ate that which he had not earned. To screw his courage up to break with his family he gave himself up to reckless drinking; he squandered seventy roubles—that is a whole year's salary—at the public-house, and drank himself mad. By this means he was able to tear himself from his own people. In a sober state he would never have had the heart to take his children from the paternal root-tree, to lead away the cow and the

horse, or to pull the slits. He took possession of a small house, built by the Gorshkovs some ten years previously, after a fire, and there he and his family lived whilst a new house was being constructed."

The ultimate complete dissolution of the Gorshkov household is merely a question of time. Thus far there has been no harm in it. The vigour of the big patriarchal families is sapped by the lowest instincts as well as by the loftiest aspirations developed by modern times. They are incompatible with individual independence. Amongst the Southern Russians, with whom the sentiment of individuality is much stronger than among the Great Russians, these composite families are unknown. Their rapid dissolution among the Russians would have been an unmitigated good if it were not accompanied by the general relaxation of social ties between all the members of the village Community.

CHAPTER IV. •

FOR a community of labourers mutual assistance is only another name for mutual insurance. The danger of falling ill or lame, of remaining without support in old age, or of having a "visitation" in the form of fire or murrain, is pretty well equally shared by all. In mutually assisting each other they are doing that which it is to their obvious interest to do; giving the same as they expect in their turn to receive. There is nothing particularly generous in it; nor do they themselves consider it to be anything very meritorious or laudable on their part. Zlatovratsky, in his "Derevenskie Budni" (sketches of every-day village life), describing one of the "old-fashioned" villages, observes how easy it is for an outsider to be led into error if he takes the peasants' statements in a literal sense without observing and investigating for himself.

If, for instance, you were to ask the peasants whether they assist the poor, they would certainly

answer, "Oh dear me, no! We are too hard-up ourselves. We throw a *Kopeck*, or a piece of bread, to the poor who knock at our window, that is all." But, if you take the trouble to observe more closely, you are surprised to discover the existence of a vast system of co-operative assistance given to the aged, the orphaned, and the sick, both in field work and in household labour; only the peasants do not look upon this as charity. It is a simple fulfilment of the obligations of their "daily life." The old man, whose corn the whole *mir* turns out to carry on a Sunday afternoon, receives only what is his due as a *mir's* labourer and tax-payer of several score of years' standing. The orphan receives but a benefit on account of labours to come.

The present increase in the number of purely industrial occupations, which now largely predominate over the agricultural, has made the necessity for this reciprocity less self-evident, and general impoverishment has made its practice hardly possible, even with the best-intentioned. People who live from hand to mouth, and who are compelled to put into requisition every working hour of the day on their own account in order to avert or to postpone their own ruin,

cannot afford to be solicitous over any needs but their own. Such considerate mutual assistance, the humanity of which is enhanced by the delicacy with which it is offered, is becoming rarer and rarer. Charity—for our people are still very charitable—is the meagre wraith of the once high conception of co-operative assistance tendered as a duty on the one hand, and accepted as a right on the other.

Engelhardt gives an exceedingly interesting account of the practice of almsgiving among the peasants of North-Western Russia (White Russian), which under other guises exists in nearly every district of the empire.

“There is no regular distribution by weight of baked bread to beggars, as is, or rather was, the custom in times of yore in the manor-houses. In my house the cook simply gives those who ask ‘the morsels,’ or small pieces of rye bread, as do all peasants. As long as a *moujik* has one loaf of bread left in his house his wife will give ‘morsels.’ I gave no orders as to the ‘morsels,’ and knew nothing about the custom. The cook decided on her own responsibility that ‘we’ must give ‘morsels,’ and she accordingly does it.

“ In our Province, even after a good season, few peasants are able to make their own bread last until harvest-time comes round again. Almost every family has to buy bread to some extent; and when there is no money for it, the head of the household sends the children, the old men and women ‘for morsels.’ This year, for instance, the crops were very bad: there was neither bread for the people nor, worse still, forage for the cattle. A man may find food for himself among the people by means of these ‘morsels;’ but how is he to feed a horse? It cannot be sent from door to door in search of ‘morsels.’ The outlook is bad, so bad that it cannot well be worse. Most of the children were sent ‘for morsels’ before St. Cossma and Damian. (1st November: the peasants count the time by the saints’ days.) The cold ‘St. George’ (26th November) in this year proved a hungry one too. There are two ‘St. George’s’ days in the year; the cold—26th November—and the hungry—23rd April, which, falling as it does in the spring, is at a very hungry time of the year. The peasants began to buy bread long before ‘St. Nicolas,’ which shows that they had not a grain of home-grown

corn in the house. For the peasant will never buy any bread until the last pound of flour is kneaded. By the end of December about thirty couples came every day and begged 'for morsels.' Among them were children and old people, also strong lads and maidens. Hunger is a hard master ; a fasting man will sell the very saints, say the *moujiks*. A young man or girl feels reluctant and ashamed to beg, but there is no help for it. There is nothing, literally nothing, to eat at home. To-day they have eaten the last loaf of bread, from which they yesterday cut 'morsels' for those who knocked at their door. No bread, no work. Everybody would be happy to work for bare food ; but work—why, there is none. A man who seeks 'for morsels' and a regular 'beggar' belong to two entirely different types of people. A beggar is a professional man ; begging is his trade. A beggar has no land, no house, no permanent abiding place, for he is constantly wandering from one place to another, collecting bread, eggs, and money : he straightway converts everything he receives in kind—corn, eggs, flour, etc.—into ready money. He is generally a cripple, a sickly man incapable of work, a feeble old-man, or a fool :

he is clad in rags, and begs in a loud voice, sometimes in an importunate way, and is not ashamed of his calling. A beggar is God's man. He rarely wanders amongst the *moujiks*, and prefers to haunt towns, fairs, and busy places, where gentlemen and merchants congregate. Professional beggars are rare in the villages; there they would have little to expect.

“A man, however, who asks ‘for morsels’ is of quite another class. He is a peasant from the neighbourhood. He is clothed like all his brother peasants, sometimes in a new *armiak*; a linen sack slung over his shoulder is his only distinguishing mark. If he belongs to the immediate neighbourhood even the sack will be missing, for he is ashamed to wear it. He enters the house as if by accident, and on no particular business beyond warming himself a little; and the mistress of the house, so as not to offend his modesty, will give him ‘the morsel’ incidentally, and ‘unawares.’ If the man comes at dinner time he is invited to table. The *moujik* is very delicate in the management of such matters, because he knows that some day he, too, may perhaps have to seek ‘morsels’ on his own account.

“‘No man can forswear either the prison or the

sack,' say the peasants. The man who calls for a 'morsel' is ashamed to beg. On entering the *izba* he makes the sign of the cross and stops on the threshold in silence, or mutters in a low voice, 'Give in Christ's name.' 'Nobody pays any attention to him ; all go on with their business, and chat or laugh as if nobody were there. Only the mistress approaches the table, picks up a piece of bread from three to four square inches in size, and gives it to her visitor. He makes the sign of the cross and goes. All the pieces given are of the same size. If any of the slices given are three square inches in size, all are three square inches. If two people come together (they generally work in couples) the mistress puts the question, 'Are you collecting together?' If the answer is 'Yes,' she gives them a piece of six square inches ; if separately, she cuts the piece in two.' "

The man who tramps the neighbourhood thus owns a house, and enjoys his allotted share of land ; he is the owner of horses, cows, sheep, clothes, only *for the moment he has no bread*. When in ten months' time he carries his crops, he will not merely cease begging, but will himself be the giver of bread to others ; if by means of

the aid now afforded him he weathers the storm and succeeds in finding work, he will with the money he earns at once buy bread, and himself help those who have none. This system of asking for help "in kind" serves as a make-shift to avoid the irretrievable ruin which would follow the selling off of his cattle and other property. It is a painful expedient, to which the peasants only resort when all others have failed.

"In the autumn"—we resume the quotation—"when the crops are just gathered, practically all these peasants eat wholemeal rye bread until their hunger is satisfied. Just a few exceptionally prudent families do add husks to their flour even at this season of the year, but such foresight is rare. When, after a time, the head of the family notices that bread is running short, the family has to begin to eat less—perhaps twice a day instead of three times, then only once; the next step is to add husks to the flour. If there is any money left after the taxes are paid, bread is bought; but if there is no money in the house, the head of the household tries to borrow, and pays an enormous interest on any accommodation he gets. Then, when all other means are exhausted, and the last bread has been eaten, the children and the old

people swing the sacks over their shoulders and tramp to the neighbouring villages asking help. Whilst the children generally return to sleep at home, their elders go to more remote parts of the country, and return home only after they have collected a considerable number of morsels. On these the family dines, and if there are any left they are first dried in the oven, and then stored away for future use. In the meantime the father is struggling to find work, or to borrow bread, and the mistress is looking after the cattle, and cannot leave the house. The grown-up young people are eager for any employment that will bring in food.

“The father has perhaps succeeded in procuring a few bushels of corn, and in that case the children no longer go to the *mir* and beg from door to door, and the mistress once more distributes ‘morsels’ to those who knock at theirs. If, on the other hand, the father has failed to procure corn, the children are followed in their piteous quest by the grown-up members of the family, and, finally, by the father himself, who does not go on foot, but with his cart and horse, his wife remaining alone in the house to look after the cattle. The advantage of driving is that the needy men can

thus penetrate much further into the country, often even beyond the borders of their Province.

“This winter it has been common enough to meet a cart full of sacks with ‘morsels’ on the road, and on the cart a *moujik*, a girl, and a boy. Such peasants do not return home before they have collected a considerable supply of bread, which they dry in the oven when stopping to sleep in some village. The family feed on these biscuits, while the father works about the house or seeks for employment somewhere else. When the stock of ‘morsels’ begins to be exhausted, the horse is once more put into the cart, and they go again on their weary round. Many families provide themselves with food in this way all the winter, and even during a part of the spring; and sometimes, when there is a good supply of these ‘morsels’ in the house, they are distributed to those who come to beg.

“All this clearly proves that these men are not professional beggars. To them people do not say, when unwilling to give anything themselves, ‘God will give you in our stead,’ as they do to a regular beggar; but, ‘We have nothing to give; we are going to solicit morsels for ourselves.’ Another distinction to be drawn between the two

classes of beggars is that whereas, as has before been stated, the peasant gives to those in need as soon as he is able, the professional beggar never gives anything to any one.

“Not to give a ‘morsel’ when there is bread in the house—is a *sin*. That is why my cook gave them without first asking for my permission. Had I forbidden her to do so she would most likely have rebuked me, and in all probability have flatly declined to remain in my service.”

In addition to this remarkable development of public-spirited self-sacrifice amongst our peasants, instances occur of yet higher manifestations of the feeling of human brotherhood.

Potantin, in writing of a commune in the Nicolsk district, Province of Vologda, which depended for its support on the work supplied by a salt-house in the neighbourhood, mentions how, in 1878, the firm began to lose ground, and was compelled to reduce the number of the men employed, by one-half. The community, brought face to face with the necessity of seeing one-half of its members condemned to starvation, passed the resolution that each peasant should work only three days in the week instead of six, as heretofore.

It was an heroic impulse which decided these

men to suffer gradually, but together, rather than to snatch the bread from one another's mouths.

As a rule, in all similar cases it has been found that the strongest will outbid the feeblest, and the whole community will look with perfect composure on the ruin of its weaker members.

This power of self-restraint on behalf of the community, has now given place to that cold-blooded indifference to others' woes, to that animal egotism, indicative of a universal breaking up, which has struck with awe many of the observers of modern village life.

There is no secret between fellow villagers concerning their material prosperity. Every peasant knows the exact number of acres tilled by each one of his companions, the number of sacks of grain he has sold, and the number he has kept, and could give an inventory of each household in turn, by heart. If some ill luck befall a family, the village knows exactly what will be the outcome of it. The ruin is foreseen, predicted, expected, with fatal certainty, and takes nobody by surprise.

Here is an excellent peasant family—a husband, wife, two boys, and a girl. It is hard work for the father to feed them all, but he has good help-

mates—an industrious, clever wife, and a daughter who has entered upon her sixteenth year. They make both ends meet. The father wishes to find a son-in-law who would consent to live with them, and is looking out for a suitable match for the girl; then the household would be complete. But it chances that the father hurts his leg, and has to keep his bed. This misfortune occurs at the season when work is most pressing, in the spring. The neighbours who have no such affliction to bear, on seeing the piece of ill luck which has befallen the family, cry, "Oh! what a pity, what a pity! Nothing could be worse than to be laid by at the season when work is heaviest. They will now have to sell their two calves to enable them to hire a labourer, and they will be unable to marry their *Mariushka*."

All this proves true to a fraction. The two calves, destined to defray the expenses of the wedding, are sold, and *Mariushka*'s marriage is postponed. The *batrak* has done his trashy work, and has gone, but the master still remains lying in his bed. An old woman treats him with various home-made medicaments, but the leg grows worse and worse.

In the meantime the mowing season has com-

menced. Now there is nothing left to sell, to pay for the hiring of a *batrak*. The father makes an effort, rises from his sick bed, sets his scythe, and goes to the field. He mows the hay, but irritates his wounded leg so badly that he falls quite ill, and at about the middle of the harvest time breathes his last.

"Now, say the neighbours, Mariushka must go to town as a servant, to earn money for her mother. There is no use in her remaining at home—nobody will marry her now, poor soul!"

And once more everything happens exactly as had been predicted. Nobody will marry Mariushka, for she cannot leave her family, and no young man will venture to enter into the household as one of its members with so many mouths to feed—two brothers under age, the mother, and his own children into the bargain. So the family remains without a man. But the taxes must be paid for the land, so they resolve to engage a permanent *batrak*. Mariushka goes to town to service to make up enough money for his wages, but she has everything to learn before she can be engaged as a trained servant. Many months pass before she is able to buy herself fitting

dresses to wear when she shall have found employment in a "respectable" house. To these difficulties must be added the numberless uncertainties and temptations besetting a young girl in a town. She may be seduced, and return with a baby to the village, and a life of eternal shame. A mere accident: the gentleman in whose family she was engaged as servant has lost his employment, and for three months is unable to pay her her wages, so that Mariushka cannot send a penny home to her mother just at the time when money is the most urgently needed. Arrears in the taxes accumulate upon the arrears of the wages due to the *batrak*.

The land is taken from the mother, and her cow is sold to pay the *batrak*. What could the poor woman do in this extremity? She has two boys to bring up, one of ten the other of eleven years of age. They are not workers as yet, but they need to be fed, and the mother has nothing to give them. Her only expedient is to send them also to town to Mariushka, who is glad to find them employment with a publican.

The mother remains alone. She is sick at heart, weary of this life of suffering and wretchedness. She sells the house and goes away, a sack

on her shoulders, to the shrine of some saint, there to pray for the soul of her deceased husband, and for the two boys who are pining away in the tavern, and for Mariushka too, of whom nothing whatever has been heard. "Oh, poor creature!" say the neighbours pityingly, as they see the owner of the ruined nest off; and a week later they welcome the new proprietors of the house. The recent drama is forgotten.

Or another case—two brothers. The elder, Nicolas, is a hard-working, indefatigable *moujik*, but he can hardly keep body and soul together, and is gnawing his heart out in vain efforts to improve his condition. Opposite him lives his brother Aleshka, a bumpkin, who never yet succeeded in anything. This Aleshka was employed as a forest surveyor, at seven roubles per month. Nicolas has ousted him. Aleshka occasionally takes a drop too much, whilst Nicolas is a total abstainer. "It is just the same to Aleshka whether he earns money or not," he said.

Ousted from this employment, Aleshka tries the wood trade, and delivers fire-wood at certain places. Nicolas "finds out" the wood-yard, offers his services at a lower price, and ousts his brother again. "What right has he to grumble?"

he asked ; " I do not hinder him from offering his services at a yet cheaper rate."

And what of their fellow-villagers, the *mir* ? What are they doing ? They look on with perfect equanimity, merely stating the facts—" John must go begging." " Peter will flourish." " Andrew will have to starve," and so on.

When Nicolas turned his brother out of his situation in the forest, " Seven roubles a month will be a God-send to Nicolas !" remarked the neighbours. " Now he will thrive apace." When Aleshka was ousted by his brother from the wood trade, and shortly afterwards lost to him a small meadow, rented from a landlord, the neighbours said, " Now Aleshka is lost, he must come to downright ruin." And Aleshka could not help ratifying their prognostication. He has a lot of children, one under another, and a sickly wife, unfortunately endowed with great fecundity. Aleshka, on seeing ruin and desolation creeping over him, gave himself up to drinking, and began to beat his wife furiously, in the hope that it might subdue her untoward fecundity, and bring it to a level with his miserable means. In this he did not succeed, and then threw the heft after the hatchet by drinking more than ever. On seeing

him stretched in the mud in the gutter, face downwards, motionless as a log, people predicted, "He will be found thus some day, dead." Aleshka, however, escaped death, and a new and terrible misfortune overtook him.

One day the news spread through the village that Aleshka's three daughters, left by the mother to the care of their elder brother, a boy of nine (the father was absent also, stealing wood from the landlord's forest), had, in playing, upset a boiling samovar, and had scalded themselves from head to foot, "In a few hours they will probably be dead," prophesied the village experts. As, however, in villages everything is known and so very many things foreseen, this prophecy was accompanied by another. "Why! perhaps now Aleshka may improve his position. Certainly it is hard upon him to have to bear such a blow, for who does not pity his own flesh and blood? But, on the other hand, nobody can pry into God's designs. Who knows but what God in his wisdom—— At all events Aleshka will have a chance; certainly his prospects may improve."

As a matter of fact the children did die, and, as a matter of fact also, Aleshka did begin to improve.

Such are the incidents which sometimes "save" a peasant from inevitable ruin! Each for himself. Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin. The commune has been transformed into a pack of galley slaves, each of whom endeavours to minimise his share of the burden and responsibilities.

The commune asks for an advance from the *zemstvo*. The *zemstvo* accedes to the demand, and sends in a subsidy only sufficient, as a matter of course, to assist the needy families. In a village composed of some twenty households there are, let us say, five families which are destitute. The money, or the provision of corn, sent by the *zemstvo* is accordingly sufficient to relieve only these five families. But the subsidy is advanced to the *mir* as a whole, under its collective responsibility. The *zemstvo* cannot have dealings with, or rely upon the solvency of, Peter or of John, and other private individuals who may be soliciting its assistance. Now, as the whole village is answerable for the cost of the supplies sent, the peasants say, "If I shall have to pay, let me have my share too." It is resolved, therefore, at the *mir's* meeting that the subsidy shall be divided amongst all, apportion-

ing, moreover, the shares according to the number of "souls" in each household. The "soul" which is the unit for measuring the working capacities of each household (as well as the amount of land apportioned to it), at the same time represents the liability of each household with regard to all those taxes and payments and duties of any kind, which fall on the commune in a lump.

Thus, in the distribution of the *zemstvo's* subsidy, the richest family, which represents five "souls," and has five shares of land, will receive most of the corn; the medium-sized, representing three souls, will have three shares. As to the landless *bobyl*, who is economically a cipher, because he does not stand even for a fraction of a "soul," he receives nothing at all, though he may have the largest family and be the most needy. People do not want to be answerable for him. If he is reluctant to resort to the usual expedient of "going for morsels," he must re-borrow the subsidy at its full valuation, and upon his own responsibility, from his well-to-do neighbours, who have received it without any individual payment.

No wonder that the barefooted horde in its turn shows no particular goodwill to its well-to-do fellow-villagers.

Ivan Ermolaëff grumbles. He is a typical "*grey moujik*," this Ivan Ermolaëff. Though with a slight leaning towards the *koulaks*, he retains all the traditions and tastes of a genuine peasant in their full intensity, and hates and despises all non-agricultural profits as unbecoming a *moujik*. He is far cleverer than another "*grey moujik*" of our acquaintance, Ivan Afanasieff, whom we introduced to the reader in a former chapter.

Whilst puny Ivan Afanasieff, with all his diligence and ardent love for the land, is unmistakably on the high road to become a landless *batrak*, energetic and ready-witted Ivan Ermolaëff will certainly hold his own, at all events for many years to come.

Working all the year round like a galley slave, Ivan Ermolaëff makes both ends meet, and "does not suffer from hunger," which is the *beau idéal* of a *grey moujik*.

Yet he grumbles. He grumbles, not against his hard lot, which he supports with stoical endurance, but against the people, against his fellow-villagers.

"You try to improve your position, and your neighbours do their best to ruin you,"

“How can that be? Why should they do it?”

“I do not know; since they do do it, they must certainly have some reason. ‘You are doing well, I am doing badly.’ ‘Well, let us so arrange matters that you shall do badly too.’ ‘It will put all upon the same level.’ ‘Judge for yourself. We have here a forest belonging to the Commune. Everybody receives a part of it for his own personal use. Well, I have hewn my wood, grubbed up the ground, have generally improved it, and transformed it into arable land. As soon as I have by my own labour obtained more land, they shout, ‘Let us have a redistribution! You hold more land than those who pay for the same number of souls. The quantity of communal land has increased; let us have a redistribution!’”

“But is not everybody free to reclaim his part of the waste land?”

“Yes, but everybody is not willing to do it. Herein lies the difference—some are not strong enough, others are too lazy. I am up before the dawn, I work in the sweat of my brow, I harvest more crops. Oh! they will take it from me, you may depend upon it. “And do you think it

will be of any great advantage to them?" "Not at all. Each will receive a bagatelle, a mere strip, a narrow slip of land. They have twice played me this same trick. It is useless to try to improve my position."

"And are there many people in your village who are thus hindering you?"

"Certainly, many. The rich bar my way, and the poor bar my way likewise."

A new stream of feeling, which is anything but benevolent, is springing up in the villages amongst the disinherited "victims" of the social struggle, which bodes evil both to social order and to their victorious brethren.

Formerly the peasants used to hate their masters, the nobles, and the *tchinovniks*, who, rod in hand, managed the manorial estates. This hatred, however bitter, fell on outsiders, who formed a small body of people, who were allowed to oppress and torture the peasants by the Tzar's sufferance, not by any power of their own.

At the present day the bitterest enemies to the people are singled out from among their own ranks. They form a detached and numerous class, which has its adherents, and agents, and supporters. The hatred they inspire in millions of

the peasants is as legitimate as that inspired by the slave-owning nobility in times of yore. Modern hatred assumes the character of class-hatred, and extends to the whole social system, of which the rural plutocracy is the necessary outcome.

CHAPTER V.

“EVERY time I happen to meet or to speak to the peasant Havrila Volkov,” says Uspensky, “I invariably think how dreadful it will be to witness the time when this Volkov shall let loose the fierce hatred and rage which lie hidden in the depths of his heart, and are at present only discovered in the cruel expression of his eyes and mouth, and by the harsh tones of his voice. For when the outward pressure which holds him down shall be removed, his hidden passions will immediately assume the form of a powerful, revengeful, and pitiless giant, raising an enormous cudgel against everything and everybody.

“A man of herculean strength, Havrila Volkov is also undoubtedly endowed with great mental energy. But the transition period through which we are passing, though already protracted to such an abnormally long time, has provided no solid food for the popular intelligence to digest ; indeed, hardly any food at all, because during all this

time nothing has been so thwarted and obstructed as the influences which might have resulted in a sound development of the popular intelligence. Owing to this, Havrila's mind is only distorted, disconcerted, unhealthily excited by vague rumours and hopes, and as unhealthily depressed by other rumours of an opposite nature. 'Money'—this is the only immutably solid thing amidst all the contradictions and uncertainties of life.

"Havrila is now about forty years of age. He was born, and grew into young manhood, in the days of serfdom, though people were already talking about the coming Emancipation.

"These rumours grew more persistent, and with them the hopes for the future grew stronger and brighter. Serfdom was at last abolished. Their lord, whom Havrila's parent served, mortgaged his estate and disappeared. The manor house stood deserted and locked up. The hateful past seemed to be blotted out for ever. Yet people had to work harder than before, because the peasants' land had been curtailed and their expenses had increased. They could not live by the land alone, and were forced to go to town to seek work there. Havrila's family, however, ruled by a hard and despotic father, preserved

a comparative affluence, because kept together by the strong hand of its head ; but it was trying to have to bear his despotism. He took all the money earned by his sons. One brother earned more, another less, for equal skill was not required for their respective work.

“ They were all put on an equal footing by the absolute rule of their father, which appeared to Havrila to be nothing less than wanton tyranny. To become rich through husbandry had gone out of fashion. The method which had come to be much in vogue was to gain wealth by speculation and by usury. A constant rage was gnawing at Havrila’s heart : the family had eaten up such a lot of his own earnings, that, if he had used it in speculative ventures, he might by that time have been as rich and as respected as their neighbour Cheremukhin, who had started in business with a solitary sixpence in his pocket. Domestic despotism oppressed him to no purpose. By agricultural work, however hard, it was futile to try to match Cheremukhin’s profits.

As time moved on, the despotic habits of the father, instead of taming down, became daily more oppressive. Taxes were increasing, the family stood in need of more money—*ergo*, the work grew

heavier and heavier, otherwise the greater expenditure could not be met, and Cheremukhin would swallow them up. All this only stirred up Havrila's rage the more. His father ought to let him live by himself on his own earnings, and after what fashion he liked. But the old man would not hear of it, and squeezed him ever closer in the effort to make both ends meet.

"Yet all this relentless work notwithstanding, ruin was always imminent. If by ill luck the horse should one day perish, they would be compelled to implore Cheremukhin's assistance, and it would be all over with their independence. But just look at Cheremukhin; he could impose his yoke on everybody, whilst nobody could impose a yoke on him, and he was a stranger to poverty and hard labour.

"To what purpose all this? Wherefore this eternal drudgery, which gave neither ease nor independence in return? Havrila and his brothers had on several occasions tried to rebel against their father's despotism, but had learned that this despotism was strong, and had moreover the support of the *mir*, who could flog the irreverent sons. Rancour brooded in Havrila's heart,—rancour against his father, against work, and against taxa-

tion, resentment towards Cheremukhin, and envy of his easily-won wealth ; indignation at the paucity of land, and the multitude of rates and taxes imposed upon the peasants. For ever working, for ever paying, without any profit for yourself or for the household. There was only one thing that Havrila understood with perfect clearness, *i.e.*, that *money* was the solution of all problems, and the means wherewith all difficulties might be settled. One needed only to make money. With money you were free as a bird ; you could buy everything, sell it, and buy it back again.

“At last the despotic father died. Havrila immediately separated from the others, and he and his wife started a new household. He had no faith left in agriculture, which had become hateful to him ; yet he was still compelled to live by this work, and under far more distressing conditions than before. Thenceforth he was the only full-grown labourer in the household. Instead of rising to it, as he had expected, he sank immeasurably below the level of his ideal, Cheremukhin. After his separation he could hardly keep the wolf from the door. All the year round he dwelt in dirt, in poverty, and in interminable, ungrateful work, without hope or respite.

“A passionate desire to make their way in the world absorbed all the thoughts of Havrila and his wife,—an energetic and stern woman. They must have money, no matter by what means. No kind of swindling came amiss to Havrila provided it promised to forward his aim—wealth. He had heard that Cheremukhin pressed hay and sold it at a profit in St. Petersburg. He was also told that damaged hay often passed undetected amongst the good—who can see what is put into the middle of a bundle of hay? Havrila commenced to speculate in rotten hay. He found customers, and at first sold them several cart-loads of sound hay, then palmed off a lot of spoilt stuff all in one consignment, and then disappeared. He repeated this operation successfully with several people in different parts of St. Petersburg, and had begun to make a little money, though the amount was very small* as yet, when one day he was caught in the act, dragged to the Police Station, and indicted before a Magistrate. He lied and prevaricated like any conjurer, but could not exculpate himself, and was locked up, and lost both hay and money.

“Swindling had proved a failure, though he knew by many examples that this was not always

so. Exasperated by his losses and his humiliation, Havrila applied his mind with redoubled energy to the discovery of some new means whereby he might retrieve his fortunes. He eagerly caught at any information which bore in any way upon money-making. Events at St. Petersburg (*i.e.*, the attempt against the Emperor's life) gave rise to a great many vague and irritating rumours amongst the masses. One day, on passing by a manorial wood, Havrila met a gentleman in a gig, a gun slung behind his shoulders, and a wild duck, just shot, lying at the foot of the box. With one flash all the wickedness and spite which lay fermenting in Havrila's head and soul broke forth into a brutal desire 'to catch the gentleman and hand him over to justice. It is all the work of gentlemen (*i.e.* these attempts) who are set against the Tzar. I will earn a reward. . . . Poaching in the Tzar's woods . . . first-rate chance . . . a reward!' And Havrila, though perfectly indifferent to the interests of the Crown, forthwith flew at the gentleman, like a robber, snatched at his gun and the duck, climbed into the gig, and, seizing the reins, drove him as a prisoner at full speed to the village. . . . 'A gentleman without a passport . . . caught by me in the Tzar's woods . . .

identify him !' shouted Havrila, with the evident desire of making as much noise and scandal as possible.

"When the superintendent officer had listened to Havrila's exultant report of his exploit he warned him : 'I shall advise this gentleman to take an action out against you for violent assault. Out of my sight, you idiot !' Havrila did as a matter of fact have to appear before the magistrate, but the gentleman spared him, and he therefore bowed low to him, craving his pardon, whilst in his breast he was boiling over with rage against the gentleman, the authorities, and his own stupidity.

" 'No,' he secretly resolved, 'one must rob. There is nothing for it but to rob.'

"An intense desire to appropriate things belonging to others, particularly money, assumed in him the strength of a devouring passion. Side by side with this covetousness there grew upon Havrila and his wife, who understood her husband's wishes at a glance, a kind of austere avarice. They had never spent a penny on tea or sugar ; since Havrila had separated from his relatives he had not smoked one ounce of tobacco nor drunk one glass of brandy. Never did he exchange a friendly word with anybody, unless

expecting to reap some profit by it. If he had called on you he would have squeezed something out of you in some way or other before he left, on that you might depend. He would literally compel you to submit to the necessity of being cheated by him. His object once attained, he would not stop at your house one minute longer; but in case of failure he would drink three samovars, and sit for five hours as dumb as an idol, until he had contrived to gain at least some of his ends.

“If he had nothing to expect from you he would pay you no attention, perhaps not recognise you at all. On looking at his cruel face and harsh eyes, which made every attempt to smile ‘like a peasant’ simply pitiful, one felt that a reserve of strength that boded no good, lay hidden in this dark soul.

“A dark night, a deserted, out-of-the-way thoroughfare, a drunken wayfarer with a bundle of banknotes in his pocket, and a blow with an iron pole-axe on the temple, must have often flashed through this energetic but benighted brain as the ‘real thing,’ the only solution to all difficulties.

“Cherishing such ideas and such feelings as

these in his breast, Havrila was nevertheless compelled to drudge away at the land. He had three children, all under age, and he worked briskly and vigorously, though sullenly. He kept down the bile and spite and rage which were devouring him, but he gnawed at the bit. When his opportunity came he would give rein to his rebellious temper, and would take a frightful revenge for the enforced submissiveness of years, and for the trampling down of his own natural feelings, for the slow murder of his two 'superfluous' children, dispatched by himself and his wife to the other world as untoward obstacles; for the humiliations of poverty, and for the galling drudgery of hateful toil."

Another interesting character in Uspensky's gallery, Ivan Bosykh, is a person of totally different temper and nature. He is, indeed, the kindest and the most benevolent of men. But he is one of the regular "victims" in the economical struggle, and the trying circumstances of his position have exasperated him to such an extent as to have converted him into certainly quite as dangerous a character as Havrila.

"Ivan Bosykh belongs," says Uspensky, "to that useless and miserable class of beings whose

existence is incomprehensible, even disgraceful in a country like Russia, but who nevertheless do exist, and during the last twenty years have been constantly on the increase, a class which, willingly or unwillingly, must be designated as 'rural proletariats.'

"Bosykh, when sober, is the kindest of men and an excellent worker, having 'golden hands,' as the peasants say nowadays. However, he is rarely seen to advantage. Only a few years ago it was otherwise. Then Ivan Bosykh was in all respects an exemplary *moujik*, and his household, though not rich, was united and orderly — 'pleasant to behold,' to use his fellow-villagers' expression. Now he is the poorest *batrāk* in the village. His cottage is fallen into decay. The window-panes are broken, and the gaps stopped up with dirty rags. He beats his wife, a clever, industrious woman, and remarkably beautiful, whom he married for love. She took a summons out against him. His three ragged children wander about the village all day long, cared for by nobody, and hungry. If you make enquiries about him in the village you will receive the most unfavourable references. He has sold the same hay three times over to three different

persons, and spent all the money in drink. He borrowed money on his heifer in three different shops, but paid it over to none of them, having sold it meanwhile to a fourth and spent the money, as usual, in drink.

The history of Ivan Bosykh's ruin and moral degradation is instructive because it is so commonplace—hundreds of thousands of Ivan Bosykh have been ruined in exactly the same manner. If Bosykh fell lower than some, it was merely because, being more sensitive, he was more subject to despair. •

The chief instruments of his ruin were as usual the village usurers, the *koulaks*. It began slowly at first. To begin with, his land was curtailed, the meadow and pasture lands were retained by the landlord, whilst the taxes in the meantime were increased, a common, oft-repeated story. With a young family like his, Ivan Bosykh could not avoid the necessity of now and then applying for small loans to fill up the gaps in his balance sheet.

“ ‘Then,’ he explains, ‘one creditor bothers you for one rouble, another for two. You make shift and pay—with interest. Interest here, interest there—and lo! there is a new gap which you had not noticed before.’

For a long time Ivan Bosykh struggled bravely against heavy odds, which he thought would be only temporary, and kept himself more or less above water, when a 'sudden visitation' overtook him and felled him to the ground. His two horses and his cow were killed by the murrain. In this desperate position Ivan Bosykh applied to a regular *koulak*, his brother-in-law. By dint of supplication and the intercession of his sister Ivan Bosykh bought a horse from his brother-in-law, on credit, for thirty-five roubles, to be paid in the spring, though the beast had cost the *koulak* no more than fifteen roubles. But Ivan accepted this deliverance even at that price, and thanked his kinsman most humbly for his kindness.*

As he had only one horse to feed, his brother-in-law offered to buy his hay. 'Ivan Bosykh, greatly pressed for money as he was, agreed to part with his hay for five kopecks per stone. Soon after he had to dispose of his heifer, as he could not feed it well after the death of his cow. His brother-in-law bought it for five roubles, and a few weeks later Bosykh learned that he had resold it for twenty-five roubles. He also learned that the hay he had parted with at five kopecks per stone had been resold in the town for twenty kopecks,

his brother-in-law making a net profit of full eleven kopecks per stone.

When Bosykh, after having delivered a lot of hay to his brother-in-law, tried to get rid of him, as he had a perfect right to do, and found another hay merchant, willing to pay him a more reasonable price—ten kopecks per stone—his brother-in-law grew furious, and charged him with base ingratitude. Another *koulak*, Parfenoff by name, the man who had packed Bosykh's hay, and whom in hanging his customer Bosykh had 'robbed' of a part of his profits, made common cause with his brother-in-law. Together they tried to enforce obedience on their common victim.

As Bosykh refused to sell for five kopecks what he could sell for ten, they resolved to take the horse from him; without a horse he would be altogether prevented from working his farm. The brother-in-law and Parfenoff tried to lead off the horse from Bosykh's house by force. A scuffle ensued, in which Bosykh proved to be the strongest. Upon this the brother-in-law lodged a complaint against Bosykh before the village tribunal. Here Parfenoff was one of the judges, and the other judges were his friends. A glass of wine here, a bottle of beer there—the verdict

was to take the horse from the defendant, and to give him twenty strokes with the rod for having boxed Parfenoff and his own brother-in-law on the ears.

“‘I was not present at the trial,’ said Ivan Bosykh. ‘After the verdict a policeman was sent to my house: “You must go to the *volost*,” he said. “What for?” “You are to be flogged.” “Oh, no, not I.” “Yes, you are, though.” “No, I won’t. Tell them to flog somebody else, if they like.” I grew quite furious,’ he continued. How is this?’ said I to myself; ‘our lords flogged us when we were serfs, and now, when that is over, a simple *moujik* like myself can flog me because I will not voluntarily allow him to rob me of my own! I gave this scoundrel (brother-in-law) one hundred roubles’ worth of my toil, but he requires more, and means to flog me into obedience.”

Bosykh resolved to make a firm stand for his rights. The horse was his rightful property by the terms of his agreement, whereby payment for it became due in the following spring, six months hence. He appealed against the judgment of the village Court, and declared that he would not give up the beast. But it was easier to come to

this resolution than to keep it. A few days later the brother-in-law, Parfenoff, and the village elder, who was also a *koulak* of the same stamp, entered his house, breaking the door of the house open with an improvised battering-ram, as well as those of the stable, where the horse lay hidden, and led it away in triumph.

“ ‘You expected that we should await the decision of the Court?’ said the elder, who led the band. ‘No! with such knaves as you we conduct things in a more speedy fashion—mind that! And you will be flogged into the bargain, take my word for it. Perhaps you want to lodge a complaint against me? Please try it. We have sentenced you to twenty lashes now; after that you will receive a hundred and twenty.’ On this they retired. •

“ Thus,’ says Bosykh, ‘I was left without my horse, and such a rage took possession of me that it seemed as though the very devil had entered into my body. My wife began to weep over our ruin; I flew at her like a madman. By God! I do not know how I could have had the heart to raise my hand against her. She began to cry, and this only increased my fury. I left her at last and ran straight to the tavern.

Here I promised the inn-keeper to sell him my hay, at two kopecks a stone, provided he would give me wine, and I drank and drank till I lost my senses. I could not reach my house, but stumbled into a ditch, with my face in the mud, and fell asleep. How long I lay there I do not know. The cold awakened me, and I opened my eyes. The moon was up ; in the village the girls were singing their songs. I arose. In passing by Parfenoff's house I saw the whole party through the window,—the elder and my brother-in-law among them, grouped round the table, on which stood a boiling samovar and a bottle of wine. They were celebrating their triumph. All my fury returned at once. I rushed into Parfenoff's house just as I was, besmeared with mud, and barefoot, 'because I had left my boots at the tavern in exchange for drink. I went straight up to the elder, and treated him to a sound rap on the snout ; then I did the same to Parfenoff, and then to my brother-in-law. They rushed at me. But no ! I was quite in earnest this time. " I will kill you, you damned scoundrels ! " I shouted. " Give me wine, you rascals ! " All my strength returned to me at this moment. I should have crushed, with one blow, the first who

had dared to approach me, and they knew it, too, for they left me alone and sent for help. I sat at the table, drank up the wine, and then with the empty bottle struck the looking-glass, which fell to pieces, and in its descent knocked the tea-tray on to the floor.

“ ‘ In the meantime help had arrived. They knocked me down, bound my hands, and put me under lock and key. All three sent in their complaints against me. I was summoned to appear before the tribunal, but I would not go, and went to the tavern instead. They passed a verdict of “ contumacy ” against me, and sentenced me to be flogged. They summoned me for the execution of the sentence. I would not go. They sent for me three times. I spat in their messenger’s face and told him that I would not go. In defence of their three snouts they sentenced me to upwards of one hundred strokes. I held fast to my resolution not to submit. Thank God there were other good people in the village to support me. Thus I succeeded in escaping from their clutches up to Lady Day, my chief consolation in the meanwhile being the tavern. By this time my new friend, the merchant to whom I had agreed to deliver the hay, began to threaten me with a writ. But

how could I bring my hay into the town when I had no horse? Besides which the tavern-keeper required the same hay, because I owed it to him for drink. I could not look people in the face for very shame.

“When Lady Day had passed I heard the tinkling of little bells, and saw three *troikas* (carriages driven by three horses) running into the village. It was the elder, the judges, and the *stanovoi*. My heart sank within me at the sight. They stopped just before my gate, entered my house, and called a village meeting. “The taxes!” No means to escape was left me. People began to bring their taxes, and the elder approached the *stanovoi*, and pointing to me said, “This peasant, your Excellency, was four times sentenced by the tribunal for having insulted, first his brother-in-law, then me, then Parfenoff, and then his brother-in-law again. He was twenty times summoned to attend at the *volost*, but he will not obey and offers resistance. Moreover he does not pay his taxes. Will you permit us to execute the verdict at once?”

“‘It was then that they laid me down. It was then that I lost my reason, and my shame, and my conscience. I lay on the ground like a log, and they lashed me, and lashed me again, in

virtue of all four resolutions. I lay there, and, will you believe it? I was frightened of myself! By God, yes! frightened of myself, frightened to jump to my feet, frightened to move, lest I should slay the first whom my hand could reach.

“ ‘ At last I perceived that the hounds had taken rather a liking to the operation.

“ ‘ Enough!’ I cried, and in such a voice that they stopped at once, the damned scoundrels!

“ ‘ Well, from that time forth I was a lost man. Lost—absolutely lost! Everything became disgusting to me, the work, the house, the light of day. The tavern grew to be my only consolation. I began even to steal! Everything went from bad to worse, and I doubt now whether there will ever again be any chance for me to retrieve myself. Something dreadful will happen, I am sure. I am quite beside myself from exasperation. A mortal anguish is gnawing at my heart. The evil one is whispering in my ear. Oh! he will incite me to something horrible. I shall end in the galleys, take my word for it.’ ”

Ivan Bosykh is one sample drawn from a number,—an illustration of the feelings which are surging in the hearts of our toiling millions. This

state of things must naturally lead to some practical manifestation on the part of the disinherited.

The "red cock," or wilful arson of another man's property, this favourite means of revenge within the power of the weak of heart, is no rare guest in modern Russian villages. Our meek and patient peasantry are, however, beginning to learn even fiercer methods of retaliation. There is ample evidence in the reports of foreign correspondents (Russian papers are not allowed to mention such delicate subjects) that agrarian crimes like those at one time of such frequent occurrence in Ireland are beginning to strike root upon Russian soil. Sometimes they assume the character of a solemn public execution. The most striking so far, has been that recently perpetrated by the peasants of a village in the Insar district (Province of Pensa), who at their public meeting passed a resolution to put the land-agent of their landlord to death, and went in a body and carried this resolution into effect. For this offence fourteen peasants were sentenced to death in October 1887 by a Court Martial, and two were actually hanged on November 24th,—a drastic sentence, and a drastic proceeding, evidently intended to strike terror into the peasantry, because according

to Russian law and every day practice, all crimes, save political ones, are tried before a jury, and there is no capital punishment for any common offence.

Still, if we take into consideration the enormity of the popular sufferings, and the paucity of agrarian crime and agrarian disturbance of any kind, we must admit that the Russian peasants practically keep very quiet.

Where lies the source of this phenomenal endurance displayed by a mass of several scores of millions of people, whose bitter dissatisfaction with their lot admits of no shadow of doubt ?

In the character of our race ? In our people's past history or present political superstitions ? Each of these causes must certainly have had its share of influence, though they are but secondary ones, which cannot explain this strange fact satisfactorily. We, for our part, think that the main cause of it lies elsewhere, and is this : the moral, political, and social discontent seething in the heart of the rural population of Russia has found a sort of safety-valve in the new evolution of religious thought which nowadays covers almost the whole field of the intellectual activity of the Russian labouring classes. Almost the whole

moral and intellectual force produced by the modern Russian peasantry runs in the channel of religion ; religion engrosses the leading minority of the people who understand most thoroughly and feel most keenly the evils of the day, and who alone would be able to put themselves at the head of any vast popular movement. That religion should play this part of intercessor between popular discontent and its logical outcome—open rebellion—is all the more natural and unavoidable inasmuch as our new popular religions are not merely a protest against, but to some extent a cure to, the evils against which the popular conscience is the most indignant. The religious enthusiasm proper to all new sects has re-established—for a time at least—more fraternal relations between those men who adhere to them, and has subdued the fierce and cynical struggle for economical predominance which is raging in our villages.

This interesting process we will endeavour to investigate in its fulness in the following studies upon popular religion.

POPULAR RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

ARE the Russian peasants so very religious ?

This question, of the highest importance, both in the present and for the future, has attracted a good deal of attention. Russians and foreigners, travellers and scholars, journalists and folk-lorists, historians and ethnographers, have dealt with it more or less exhaustively.

The prevailing opinion among foreigners is, that the Russian peasants, though imbued with many superstitions, are nevertheless a very religious race. Amongst those Russian observers and scholars who are recognised as the best authorities on the subject, the contrary opinion predominates, though it is far from being universal.

Thus, the most prominent of our historians, N. Kostomarov, who unites to his vast erudition an unrivalled historical insight, is of opinion that the modern orthodox peasants—of whom alone we are speaking here—are at much the same

standpoint as were their forefathers, the Muscovites, of the seventeenth century, and they, according to Kostomarov, "were remarkable for a state of such complete religious indifference as to be without a parallel in the annals of Christian nations." Another historian, S. M. Solovieff, of Moscow, draws from the same facts a different conclusion, extolling throughout his work the "deep devotion" of the Russians to their creed.

A numerous group of young scholars, who make the study of popular religions their speciality, such as Yousoff, Abramov, Prugavin, and others, adhere entirely to the opinion of Kostomarov ; whilst the whole body of the Slavophiles, amongst whom are men of undoubted sincerity and learning, will swear by all they hold sacred that there never was nor will be another people so pious as the Russians. The great novelist, Count Leo Tolstoi, is pretty much of the same opinion, though with him it springs from an entirely different source.

We do not in the least intend to imply by all this that the question we are about to consider is insoluble. To the best of our comprehension it is not only soluble, but already solved, with

as ample an array of documentary proof as questions of this class admit of. It is, however, quite evident that it must by its very nature remain a complicated and tangled problem.

To completely unravel it is an impossible task. Many of these discrepancies have their origin in the preconceived ideas of the observers, who are quite capable of seeing white where it is really black. Discrepancies in the bare statements of impressions and facts admit of no reconciliation, and must be left to the judgment of those who may care to investigate for themselves. Much, however, depends also on the light in which different persons view the same facts and the various manifestations of the spiritual life of our people. With regard to this much may be done towards both explaining and removing misconceptions and misunderstandings.

If we follow the peasants in their everyday life we shall hear God's name uttered at every step. The will and biddings of God are constantly mentioned as the base of the moral and social code.

A peasant in the act of engaging himself, in some time of distress, to work on the estate of his well-to-do neighbour is unwilling perhaps to enter

into a formal agreement at the communal office. "Never mind," he says to his employer, "I know you will settle with me in a *godly* way"—which means, fairly, without taking advantage of his present helplessness.

Two sons of a deceased father are mayhap quarrelling about their inheritance, each thinking that he has claims to a larger share than the other is inclined to admit. They will go and choose an old man as arbiter, and they will say, "Judge between us in a *godly* way"—which means, according to the highest standard of his moral consciousness, which is supposed to be superior to the laws of common justice. The old man will thereupon divide the money and the other property, for instance, according to the individual claims of each, calculated, let us say, upon the basis of the number of years they have been workers in the family (which is common law); but the stock of corn left in the granary he will divide equally between the two. That is more *godly*, according to his notion. The assistance given to the sick and the destitute is a "godly act"; disobedience to parents, injustice to an orphan, is a sin which God will punish. The name of God is constantly on the peasant's lips.

God's will is the source and sanction for every-thing which is just, kind, humane.

"Why, then," the reader will ask, "does not this all mean that these people are very religious indeed?"

A disciple of Count Leo Tolstoi will certainly answer with an emphatic affirmative. And he will be quite right from his dogmatic point of view. If we choose to apply the name of religion to a social philosophy, which is based on a system of pure ethics, with no admixture of theology, these people may certainly be called religious.

Baron Haxthausen represents the opposite extreme when he extols the extraordinary religiousness of the Russian peasants after having witnessed how fervently whole crowds of them prostrate themselves before the *ikons*; and he too is quite right from his particular point of view.

A savage extending his arms towards an idol, or bowing in wonder and admiration before the glorious vision of the morning sun, is certainly under the spell of religious emotion.

Religious feeling is a complicated one, which we do not propose to analyse here. Our object is a purely practical one. Religion in the common acceptance of the term, such as universal history

has made it, is neither pure ethics nor pure theosophy. For us it implies a certain union of the two—of the ethical and theological, of the natural and supernatural. We all, Freethinkers and Christians alike, agree, moreover, in associating with the name of religion, the idea of a great, sometimes an overwhelming, impulsive force of its own.

This is indeed the reason why the study of religion has for us, as a rule, such an absorbing interest.

But how is it possible to gauge the potential force of this agent in a given community—the Russian, for example? Where lies the main source of the impulsive power of religion? What are the symptoms of its presence?

Disagreement on these points would necessarily lead to confusion and misunderstanding. In order, therefore, to avoid all possible misapprehension we will in a few words explain our general standpoint.

First of all we take for granted the absolute independence of pure ethics from any religious doctrines. Human ethics, the moral principles which regulate the relations between man and man, have a much broader basis than the doctrines of Christianity, or any religion whatsoever.

They spring from the human heart, from man's social nature, and are manifested wherever men are thrown peacefully together. When tribes first broke up into families, their founders learnt, from the very nature of this new institution, the first lessons of morality, and at once grasped the necessity of putting the common good before their private benefit. They learnt to suppress their narrow and selfish interests for the sake of wider and far-reaching ones ; the needs of the family ranked before those of the individual. The extension of the principles of morality, which are the result of association, over large bodies of people was the one vital condition of the survival and progress of all tribes as they issued from the woods ; and such of the older communities as have left any record of themselves at all, were able to formulate principles of morality to which centuries of culture have not been able to add an iota.

But civilisation has performed a more difficult task, in constantly enlarging the circle which is comprised of those to whom morality is binding and transgression to its laws blameworthy. In the days of the Seven Sages this circle was co-extensive with the walls of each town. In

Italy, when Alighieri was giving vent to his sublime indignation, and much later even than that, it was so still. The Middle Ages, with all their Madonnas, saints, and legions of priests and monks—accredited preachers on the theme of Christian brotherhood and equality—had a code of morals whose benefits were confined to the mutual intercourse of the privileged classes amongst themselves. The “villeins” were excluded from its protection as completely as were the “barbarians” of antiquity.

Civilisation has broken up these caste distinctions within the nationalities. The dominion of human ethics has been extended, we will not say over the whole of the human race, because the coloured races are evidently outside its pale as yet, but we may, with the aid of a good deal of charity, say over the whole family of the white nations. Here the violation of the first principles of morality, though still only too common, is always reprovèd by the public conscience with an earnestness which certainly increases with each succeeding generation.

This widening of the spheres of human sympathy, which is the best result of the incipient fruits of civilization, was not the result of preaching or

teaching or speculation. Sympathy, in any of its innumerable degrees, must be spontaneously felt. People who do not instinctively care about one another can hardly be induced to do so by the persuasion, entreaty, or command of some superior authority.

Neither could the growth of knowledge, nor the spread of culture, as such, bring this about. But civilization has indirectly done it all by the marvellous broadening of the intellectual horizon of modern man, by introducing to him in spirit, myriads of people who did not exist for his forefathers, and in holding before his mental vision that which is loftiest and noblest in all humanity. Civilisation has, as yet, only to a very slight extent weakened the barriers of class institutions, but it has overthrown the barriers created by many prejudices, and it has destroyed the barriers of space ; and herein lies the real cause of the spread of the idea of human brotherhood among men, which is now assuming an earnestness of purpose unknown to the world two, nay, even one short century ago.

The instinct of sympathy, innate in man, is the source and creative principle of all which has life in human communities, as the sun's heat in

the world of organic nature. And, like the sun's heat, it asserts its creative force on the removal of the material obstacles which screen its vivifying rays.

And what of religions? We mean the great monotheistic religions, which have played so mighty a part in shaping the destinies of mankind. These religions are the fairy daughters of these same sympathetic instincts, which they may be said to condense and absorb in enormous quantities, converting them into moving force.

The founders of all the great historical religions were, above all, moral teachers, and gave expression to the broadest conception of morals to which their century and nation had attained; and amongst these none laid more stress on human ethics, nor, in advocating the principle of love, gave utterance to words so deep and true and heart-reaching, as the great Galilean. Jesus of Nazareth certainly taught men to love one another. But the gospels written about him, and the superstructure of religion bearing his name, enjoin us to love Christ, which is something very different.

In all those religions of which we are speaking, the personal, human charm of the Founder, and

the poetry of his life, have been the chief power wherewith the high, devotional, altruistic instincts of men have been stirred and riveted upon God. But Jesus, martyr upon earth and God in heaven; Jesus, shedding his blood and giving his life out of love for mankind, and for each man individually; ever present to each one of his disciples as a living person; standing ready to be the recipient of transports of gratitude and love in this world, and to pass them on in the world to come—has obtained an unique, an unparalleled command over the emotional side of human nature.

This it is which gave to his religion the power to conquer the world. But by the same policy the educational, the humanizing elements, so prominent in the original doctrine of the Founder of Christianity, were pushed entirely into the background. The God Jesus absorbed and detached his worshippers from humanity, and monopolized them completely for himself. In other words, his figure was so enormously magnified in the eyes of his worshippers as to render men and mankind, with all their petty cares, very insignificant objects of interest when compared with him. The only valuable service which a man full of love for his fellow-men could

render to them was to convert them to the same faith, thus persuading them likewise to forget as much as was possible everything for which they were naturally most inclined to care. Indifference to all which lay outside the pale of spiritual pursuits grew to be the essential characteristic of the religion of Jesus. The beauty of his doctrine and life were lost as a moral lesson and an example for men, and served only to facilitate the access to heaven by increasing the fervour of adoration, and by enhancing the fascination of his person.

When the public mind is in its natural and ordinary state, the human love, pity, and enthusiasm called forth by Christianity only add to the spiritual enjoyments furnished by religion. And when in a man or in a nation religious emotions rise to their highest pitch and become vehement, gushing, irrepressible stimulants for action, these actions are self-centered; their tendency always is to serve God and not humanity, and woe unto humanity when the thing of God clashes with the thing of man!

But what is the thing of God? What does God command? What will redound to the glory of God's name, what to its abasement?

Every century, every epoch gives a different answer to these questions, creating its God after its own image. Thus it has come to pass that the Christian's heaven is peopled with as many different Christs as there have been generations of Christians. In our own noble and truly philanthropic century, we see Christ teach his followers the doctrine of Christian socialism. During the epoch of the great English revolution, when the English middle class first awakened to a sense of its strength and independence, it was Christ who led Cromwell's battalions in those glorious fights for freedom ; it was Christ who sustained the civil courage of President Bradshaw ; it was he who guided the hand which wrote the Defence of the English people and the revindication of the freedom of the press. But Christ likewise ordered the Smithfield executions, the massacres of St. Bartholomew, and the Spanish Inquisition.

There is not a thing, however sublime, not a thing, however abominable, which, in some time or place, religion in the name of Christ has not countenanced and peremptorily ordered. But whatever the difference in the moral and social value of these acts inspired by religion may be, they all exhibit the same characteristics of in-

domitable energy, straightforwardness, and intense exaltation, which measure neither the sufferings to be undergone nor those to be inflicted on others. Religion as a direct agent in social life is an enormous but a neutral force, intensifying whatever it touches without creating any inner change.

The really great and positive service rendered by religion to the cause of human progress has been an indirect one, and lies in the intellectual domain. Having by its very nature access to the most primitive intellects, those intellects which are absolutely proof against any other spiritual influence, the promptings of religion rapidly permeated almost every particle of the body social, sometimes culminating in one of those moral tempests which will fill remotest posterity with awe and consternation. They shook the firm rock of popular intellectual apathy and stagnation to its foundations, and awakened the people, as with an Archangel's trumpet, from the torpor and smallness of narrow, everyday cares. They stirred millions, physically and morally, and roused them into taking part in some kind of intellectual pursuit. It is doubtful indeed whether any other force than religion could have done this to the same extent; and this is

why the epochs of great religious excitement were those wherein the human mind made its most astonishing advances.

In this attempt to sketch the state of religious feeling amongst the bulk of the Russian peasantry, we will consider religion exclusively from the above-named historical point of view, as an active or potential mover of the masses. We cannot, therefore, dismiss the question by merely inquiring how far our peasants are Christians in their ethical conceptions, or even their practical conduct.

Milton's Satan, in speaking to the young Son of Mary about the Athenian Philosophy, observes very pertinently that—

“ All knowledge is not couch'd in Moses' law,
The Pentateuch, or what the Prophets wrote ;
The Gentiles also know, and write, and teach
To admiration, led by Nature's light.”

The social conditions under which our peasantry lived for centuries have been favourable to the spontaneous development among them of such “pan-human” morals. They are Christ-like as a matter of course. The infiltration of actual Christian ethics amongst them is very probable, nay certain, given such favourable ground ; but

whether this be so to a great or only to a small extent, this does not in the least imply that Christianity, as a religion has a strong hold over them. Furthermore, the fact that our people dub their whole system of morality with the name of religion is equally inconclusive. The question we have to investigate is, how far the channel between the natural and the supernatural is open with them, and how far they have the element of the supernatural stored up in their minds. We mean the supernaturalism of Christianity,—because that of fetishism and paganism—has no motive force in it.

CHAPTER II.

It has been admitted that Christianity, as far as its ethics are concerned, must have actually filtered down to our peasantry. Eight centuries of official Christianity could not pass over their heads without leaving some trace behind. But as in the Christian Religion the theological doctrine goes hand in hand with the ethical, we are bound to admit that in the process of infiltration the people's natural predispositions have operated as a kind of endosmic disintegration of the religion : whilst they accepted one part of the doctrine offered to them, they remained completely deaf to the other. It is undeniable that the bulk of our population has, up to the present day even, a very faint conception of the framework, as a whole, upon which the religion to which they officially belong, is based.

The Russian peasantry is still wallowing in superstitions. There is hardly a nation in Christendom which has a demonology—a remnant of

ancient paganism—so well elaborated and so deeply rooted as is that of the Russian peasants. Their apocryphal mythology can indeed vie with that of the Ancients in the number of its deities, if not in their poetry. There are sylvan spirits and river spirits, both male and female, the naiades, and the river-gods, and household spirits, lares and penates, in whose existence and occasional apparition, and frequent interference in their household affairs, the peasants have an unshaken belief.

With the advent of Christianity the heathen gods and goddesses were not annihilated, but only driven from heaven into hell. To have declared the gods which had reigned over the land for so many generations to be a mere fiction would have seemed a perfect absurdity, but it was only too natural that the dethroned powers should resent the desertion of, and try to punish and worry, their former worshippers. Thus, in the eyes of the people they necessarily assumed the character of malignant spirits, waging constant war against them, and compelling them to be always on their guard. Our forefathers, however, as well as the Russian peasants of to-day, were a peaceful and a cautious people. That which they

most wished for was to be left to themselves by both the contending parties. They found it more expedient to buy their peace by bribing both, than to resolutely side with one party against the other.

Christianity met with scarcely any resistance in taking possession of the country of St. Wladimir and his progeny, but many generations, nay, many centuries, after their conversion, professing Christians continued to worship their old heathen gods, according to their ancient rites, making sacrifices and offerings to them by the side of the water and at the foot of the trees, as the chroniclers and bishops complained throughout the Middle Ages. The worship of a heathen goddess known as *Holy Friday* was still prevalent in the seventeenth century. The Tzar Peter the Great issued an *ukaz* against those who took part in these rites.

Nowadays no formal worship of this goddess takes place, though she still retains a very prominent place in the popular Olympus, and, as "Holy Friday," plays an important part in many apocryphal legends relating to Hell and Paradise. Thousands of customs and observances of flagrantly pagan origin are, however, faithfully preserved by our people. Fishermen still offer

small propitiatory sacrifices to the river-gods, and each family does the same, so as to keep on good terms with its household deities. Sorcerers, who are the priests of these malignant spirits, hold their own in the face of the *pop*, accredited minister though he be of the dominant creed, and are eagerly applied to as magicians and advisers. The *pop* is held in the most reverence, but the sorcerer is certainly more feared. The safest plan is to keep aloof from both, because even the *pop* is not always welcome either. He is all very well in church, at harvest festivals, at weddings, at christenings, and at the performance of any other regular function of his office; but if you are ill-advised enough to take a *pop* on board your ship you will of a surety encounter a storm. If you meet him on the way you must expect some mishap to befall either yourself or your beasts.

A dread of these chance meetings and dealings with the *pop* is shared by all the Russian peasantry. The official explanation as to the source of this not very flattering superstition is, that the peasants in past times were in the habit of being rebuked by their clergy for their heathenish practices. Is not, however, a more simple and

more rational answer to the problem, and one which coincides better with the character of this superstition, to be found in the dread felt by the peasants, lest the inferior, malignant deities which sway the elements should be provoked to wrath and revenge by the evidence of any close connection between their enemy and the peasants?

Another instance of that sly wariness characteristic of uncertain minds is afforded by the evident transfer of the worship at one time accorded to the chief heathen gods, to genuine, canonized saints of the Greek calendar. The Prophet Elias, for instance, owing probably to his extraordinary aeronautical experience recorded in the Bible, was invested by the popular imagination with the exclusive management of thunder and lightning. When it thunders our people say, It is Elias the Prophet, who is driving in his chariot on the clouds. The flashes of lightning are the arrows he throws to the earth. It is he who sends or withholds rain or hail, and it is to him that special prayers are addressed when the crops are threatened with drought. He is indeed none other than the well-known Perun, god of thunder, clad in the raiments of the noble and fierce Tishbite.

“ St. Vlas, whose name suggests that of Volas or Veles, the god of cattle, of vegetation (perhaps the sun-god), was converted, by popular fancy, into a substitute of the ancient protector of flocks and herds. This saint, however, shares his dominion with gallant St. George, who slew the dragon, and on whom the people look as their especial protector against wild beasts ; sometimes too as a sort of God's vicegerent, running his errands on his magnificent charger.

Of all the saints, St. Nicolas is perhaps the most popular with the Russians. Half the heathen Zyrians worship him, and so do other savage aborigines of Siberia, and afford an interesting illustration of the gradual transformation of Christianity into pure paganism.

There is much that is grossly material in this worship of the saints in general. It is all very well for the orthodox catechism to declare that the worship of the *ikons* is a purely spiritual one, inasmuch as by it, through the power of the painter's brush, the memory of these holy men is kept fresh in the minds of the faithful. In the eyes of the people the *ikon* is a living thing ; the very body of the saint, whose spirit dwells in it as the man's soul inhabits his corporeal

frame. They believe that the *ikon* feels 'pain' and pleasure, resents insults, and is gratified by kind treatment, just as a living being would be. In one of the popular legends, entitled "The Greedy Pop," we are told how St. Nicolas inflicted severe trials on the *pop* of his chapel for having, in a fit of spite (brought on by the small receipts of the chapel), struck the *ikon* of its patron saint with a bunch of keys. On finally forgiving the delinquent, merciful St. Nicolas warns him: "Go, but take care not to strike *me* with the keys on *my* bald pate again. Look! you have almost broken *my* skull" (Athanasieff Legends).

These popular legends of ours, the outcome of the collective imagination of the illiterate peasantry, handed down by oral tradition from generation to generation, form documentary evidence of the greatest value. Indeed, in them we have the only genuine expression of the religious ideas of the masses. They give us some idea, too, as to many other articles of popular faith as it really is, and not as the orthodox Church wishes it to be.

I may mention here that when the well-known folk-lorist, Athanasieff, in 1859 issued his volume of popular legends, its publication was peremptorily prohibited by the censors of the

press. It is, of course, not easy to comprehend the wisdom of prohibiting the use in public libraries and by a few specialists, of matter which, in the form of oral tradition, is the common property of millions; but we may infer thereby that popular theology, as seen in these tales, is not exactly in accord with the teachings of the orthodox Greek Church. What, for instance, could be more heretical than the idea of the *devil* as the *junior brother* of God and his co-partner in the creation of the universe? Yet this is an exact account of what we find in the legend known as "Noe the Godly."

The devil is a great favourite with the popular muse, and is treated with remarkable fairness. He is represented as the enemy of man, doing his best to drag him down into hell. But as this is his trade he cannot help it, and the people bear him no malice in return. He is a good devil after all. When treated kindly he is capable of unselfish attachment; even when provoked he sometimes shows a most praiseworthy forbearance and moderation in taking his revenge. One curious legend, "The Devil and the Smith," relates how a smith took pity on the devil, whom all abused, and drew his portrait on the wall of

his shop. Whenever he entered it he was wont to greet the devil's image thus : "How do you do, companion?" For this kindly feeling the devil rewarded the smith by making him very skilful and prosperous in his trade. When, however, the smith died and his son succeeded to the business, the position of the devil was much changed for the worse. Instead of greeting him daily with a kind word, the young smith fell into the habit of dealing two or three blows with his hammer upon the devil's head, and every time he returned from church he spat in his face. For a long time the devil suffered this to go on, but at last he lost patience. "I have borne with these improprieties long enough," said he to himself. "I must take my revenge." He was as good as his word, and placed the young smith in a great predicament, the exact nature of which we will not record. But when the young man was already on his way to the scaffold, the devil suddenly appeared, and upon the promise being given that henceforth the young smith would treat him with the same respect as his father had shown before him, the devil saved him from an ignominious death, and set everything straight, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The whole bearing of the Christian theological system seems to be entirely lost upon the bulk of the people. God the Father and God the Son are two totally distinct persons, standing in the perfectly concrete relation towards one another of a father on the one hand and a son upon the other. The person of the Son is represented with great sympathy and uniform consideration. He is the champion of the people, always siding with the poor *moujik* against his rich neighbour. But we should look in vain for any trace of genuine religious inspiration in the treatment of this figure. There is nothing which reveals the touch of a living image upon a living soul. He is introduced rather as an onlooker in stories about others, to illustrate popular views on certain points, and to solve certain problems. There is as little life in him, or passion about him, as in a secondary character introduced for the purpose of giving utterance to moral views in some imaginary story. As to the person of God the Father, he appears in the popular legends very vaguely delineated as a hard taskmaster, and whenever introduced by the popular muse is treated with a certain amount of ill-feeling and hostility.

In the encounters with the "retired soldier" (the wit of all these legends), God's orders are repeatedly baffled and set at naught by the cunning of the soldier, who stands before men defending them from death as long as he can.

Most of these legends are, however, devoted to the adventures and exploits of the minor lights of the popular heaven—the saints. It must be confessed that they are represented as a rather queer set. They quarrel among themselves, brag about their strength and achievements, sometimes cheat one another, and when they want to play some trick scruple not to tell deliberate falsehoods.

In the legend entitled "St. Elias and St. Nicolas" we are told the story of a *moujik* who was very devout towards St. Nicolas, but paid no attention whatever to St. Elias.

One day the two saints passed by his fields, which were all green with sprouting vegetation.

"What a rich harvest the man will gather!" exclaimed St. Nicolas, "and it is only fair that he should, for he is a good *moujik*, fearing God and respecting the saints. Wealth is coming to the right person."

"Oh, well," answered St. Elias, "that still

remains to be seen ;" and the wrathful saint then announced his intention of sending hail and storm on the field.

On learning this, St. Nicolas ran to the *moujik* and advised him to immediately sell his growing crops to the *pop* of St. Elias's chapel.

Some weeks later the two saints were once more passing the same way.

"Look," said St. Elias, "how well I have belaboured the *moujik's* fields. There is hardly one sheaf left."

"Quite true," answered St. Nicolas, "only you have destroyed the crops belonging to the *pop* of your own chapel, and not those of the *moujik*, because he sold them to him a few weeks ago."

"Never mind," said Elias, "I will reward my *pop*, and will make his fields twice as good as before."

St. Nicolas ran to the *moujik* once more, and advised him to buy his crops back again, which the *moujik* did with great advantage to himself.

So the naïve story goes on—St. Elias inveighing, threatening, striking ; St. Nicolas forewarning his friend the *moujik* in time, and suggesting various tricks by which he might turn the intended punishment to his own advantage.

"Oh, brother Nicolas," St. Elias at last exclaimed, on seeing all his efforts frustrated, "I guess that you have reported all I told you to the *moujik*."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed St. Nicolas; "how can you charge me with such a thing?"

"Oh, well! you may say what you like—I am sure it is all your doing. But you may rely upon it, the *moujik* shall hear of me yet."

"But what will you do to him?"

"That is my business, which I will not confide to you."

St. Nicolas hastened to the *moujik*, and ordered him to buy two candles, one as thick as his wrist and worth a rouble, the second as thin as a straw and only worth one kopeck, and to be on the road at such and such a time and place.

"Where are you going?" asked the two saints who met him.

"To the church to put this thick candle before St. Elias, my benefactor, who has been so generous to me."

"And this thin one?"

"This thin one will do for St. Nicolas," said the *moujik*, and went his way.

"What do you say to that, Elias?" said St.

Nicolas. "You accused me of having reported all you said to the *moujik*. I hope you yourself now see that I did nothing of the kind."

In the legend called "The Marvellous Thrashing of Corn," St. John the kind-hearted is described in a fashion which savours rather of the disrespectful. Once he was wandering with other apostles on the earth, when night overtook them in an open field. It was winter time, and the frost was bitter. It seemed hard to the saints to spend the night unsheltered. They accordingly knocked at the door of a *moujik*, who on seeing so large a company at first refused them admittance. He relented, however, when the wanderers promised to help him in the morning with his thrashing. When early in the morning the *moujik* called them, the apostles wanted to go to work, but St. John the kind-hearted persuaded them to sleep awhile longer. When, after a time, the *moujik* came once more to summon them, and saw they were still sleeping, he took a whip and administered a good flogging to the nearest sleeper, who happened to be St. John the kind-hearted.

"Stop!" cried St. John the kind-hearted, "we will follow you at once to the courtyard."

The *moujik* believed him and went away. But as soon as the door closed behind him St. John the kind-hearted exclaimed,—

•“Bah! He has treated us roughly, and yet expects us to work for him. Let us sleep awhile longer.”

The apostles, who had proposed to descend, allowed themselves to be over-persuaded, and resumed their rest, St. John the kind-hearted having slyly taken the precaution of changing his place.

When the *moujik* comes he will again apply his whip to the nearest sleeper, thought the saint, and accordingly stretched himself out at the opposite end of the room.

The *moujik* came again, whip in hand, but said he to himself, “Why should I always beat the same man?” and he applied his whip this time to the sleeper who lay the farthest from the door. Thus did St. John the kind-hearted have to bear the next thrashing too.

The same promise given on the part of the belaboured saint, the same scene after their host had left them, followed by the same result for the unlucky saint, who had this time put himself in the middle.

After his third thrashing St. John the kind-hearted found that it was more troublesome to sleep than to work, and urged his companions to descend in hot haste.

That which is here worthy our attention is not, of course, the disagreement between all these legends and the canon of Scripture and the catechism, but their general tone.

Our dissenters also have their religious poetry, "verses," or hymns, which are often at variance, not merely with the Bible but with good sense as well. Here is one illustration, the hymn about "Halleluiah's Wife." It tells how Mrs. Halleluiah (*sic*), her baby-child in her arms, stood before a blazing fire in her room, when Jesus entered. He told her that he was flying for life from the Jews, who were pursuing him closely, and bade her save him. Halleluiah's wife on hearing Jesus' summons, tore her baby-child from her breast and threw it into the blazing fire, and took Jesus to her breast in its stead.

When the Jews broke into the room and demanded to know where Jesus was, Halleluiah's wife pointed to her baby burning in the oven, and said it was he. The Jews went away with-

out having recognised Jesus, who was in her arms.

This song is perfectly apocryphal. The incident about baby Jesus coming by himself and speaking is strange ; and the conversion of the word Halleluiah into a living person, having a wife and a child, is quite absurd ; but the whole of this terrible song breathes the wild poetry of religious exaltation. It expresses in a powerful though somewhat clumsy form an intense feeling of devotion, and readiness for self-sacrifice for the sake of God. • The funny, flippant stories of the orthodox peasants, however, whether canonical or not matters not, of which some samples are given, • savour rather of amusement at the expense of orthodoxy than of expressions of earnest religious sentiment.

CHAPTER III.

THERE is another test which may be applied to prove the intensity of the religious feelings of a community, more tangible, and therefore perhaps more convincing, than the former. This is the position held by the clergy. A strong, earnest religion means an influential and a respected clergy, and *vice versâ*. A general contempt for the clergy is incompatible with great zeal for the religion which they profess. Religion is not like a positive science, where the personal feeling inspired by the exponent has nothing whatever to do with the acceptance or rejection of his doctrine.

Now there cannot be, and there is no divided opinion as to how matters stand between the Russian people and their clergy. To put it in the most charitable way possible, the *pops* are not respected by the *moujiks*. The orthodox clergy, as a body, have no moral influence over the masses, and enjoy no confidence among them. The

extreme conservatives agree with the socialists as to this fact, though the latter consider it to be a great boon, constituting one of the few compensations for our unfortunate historical past; whilst the former very justly see in it one of the heavy odds against them, and vainly seek to find a remedy for a malady past all cure.

The relations between the *moujiks* and their *pops* have little, if anything, of the spiritual in them. Let us charitably admit as many individual exceptions as can be wished, it yet remains an undeniable fact that as a rule the *pops* are looked upon by their parishioners not as guides or advisers, but as a class of tradesmen, who have wholesale and retail dealings in sacraments. In Russia it is only the superior or *black* clergy (the monks) who are endowed with riches, and who receive stipends sufficient to maintain them in ease and opulence. For the *white* or inferior clergy, the married curates, there is fortunately no State endowment. In the rural districts they possess, it is true, some freehold land for farming purposes, but their chief source of revenue is the fees they receive for ministering at baptisms, burials, weddings, special masses, and private services such as every peasant's family desires to

have performed on some occasions in their own homes.

The principle on which this arrangement is based is fair and equitable enough, since thereby the expenses for the maintenance of the clergy are distributed amongst those who desire their ministrations. Unfortunately the exceeding poverty of the peasants on the one hand, and on the other the exceeding greediness of the *pops*, who rarely care for anything beyond their own profits, make it a source of most shameless abuse and heartless extortions. The *pops*, as a matter of course, haggle over every penny in the price of their peculiar merchandise, and as they hold moreover a monopoly, can drive any of their spiritual sheep to the wall.

The wedding, or the christening, or the burial cannot be put off indefinitely, nor can it be performed by another clergyman except by the special licence of the parson of the village. If the *moujik* is too poor, or the sum demanded too high, the *pop* does not scruple to flatly refuse to administer the sacrament. Many cases have been reported by the newspapers of *pops* having *refused to bury the dead* because they had not been able to come to terms with the

relatives ; this certainly being the extreme point to, which churlishness can attain. We hear the same story from every quarter, but will not waste space here on illustrations, of which it would be only too easy to find enough to cover many pages, nay, even to fill chapters. Our churches are not houses of prayer, but houses of plunder, as the dissenters say, and this is the chief cause of the deep-seated estrangement between the people and the orthodox clergy. •

The exceeding sensitiveness of the consciences of believers to the practical conduct of their religious teachers is an accepted fact. Whenever there has been the slightest awakening of the religious sentiment in the masses, it has been the unworthiness of the vessel which has been first felt ; the turbidness of the contents was not discovered, or even looked for till afterwards. Theological subtleties are beyond the comprehension of the uneducated, whilst on the other hand the moral inconsistencies and shocking practices of the men who represent the Church, wound the eyes of all, and cause their hearts to rise in indignation, wrath, and disgust, with the result that thousands turn a willing ear to the apostles of some new creed,

Dissatisfaction on the part of the people with the clergy has played a very important part in stimulating, and particularly in widening, all great religious movements, and that in Russia is no exception to this common rule. Diatribes against the corruption of the orthodox clergy form the favourite themes of the dissenting prophets of our day. They are as virulent and effective as was the outcry raised by the leaders of the Reformation against the great parent Church. A closer study of the inner development and the propagation of Russian dissenting sects only proves that, their religious aspirations having once been awakened, the Russians can no more put up with the scandalous venality and extortions of our *pops* than could the Germans with the traffic in indulgences and other similar practices. But this fact only serves to throw into stronger relief the strange equanimity of the orthodox. They are as fully awake to the shortcomings of their *pops*, and despise and ridicule them almost as willingly, as do the dissenters themselves. Yet they seem to be quite satisfied with what they have, and make no effort to get anything better.

What can it all mean? Why do the peasants

care about such *pops* and their ministrations at all? And if they do not value them, why do they pay them, poverty-stricken as they themselves are? The heavy expenses incurred by the great bulk of the population for the satisfaction of their religious needs suffice alone to exclude any idea of levity. When we see a *moujik* bargaining eagerly with a *pop* for a religious ceremony which he wishes performed, or a prayer which he wishes to have recited, and then go away in despair and return an hour later and reiterate every means of persuasion, entreaty, coaxing, and upbraiding to obtain an abatement of a few kopecks in the price demanded, and finally, when brought to bay, disbursing the money, with bitter complaints against the *pop's* covetousness, we cannot suppose that his feelings towards his spiritual father can still be very friendly or reverential. But at the same time we cannot help coming to the conclusion that there must be something in the *pop's* ministrations for which the *moujik* must care very earnestly indeed; he must put his faith in the outward form, if not in the inner virtue of the prayer or the ceremony,—in the *rite*, if not in the religion.

If we wish to find the cue to the strange state

of our people's religious feelings, we must bear in mind the leaven of heathenism which up to the present day has permeated the rudimentary Christianity of our rural population. Time in its progress has so far influenced them in matters of religion as to cause them to drop the formal worship of Baal, but with the bulk of the people orthodoxy means little beyond a purely heathenish ritualism. An orthodox *moujik* believes in the virtue of the *pop*'s ceremonies and recitals in pretty much the same sense as he believes in the efficacy of the perfectly incoherent and incomprehensible conjurations of the exorcists. Provided the *pop* be the right *pop*, and the words he utters be spoken in the right way and in the right place, they will have their due effect, whatever be the attitude of mind of the speaker or his personal character, or whether he does it for love or for money.

This standard of religion does not necessarily exclude a certain zeal in the observance of its claims, and in the fulfilment of religious duties. A pilgrim who trudges his weary way for thousands of miles to kiss the shrine of some saint; a mother who allows her sick child to dwindle away for lack of substantial food rather than

break the rigorous Lenten fast by giving it a sip of milk ; a penitent on his knees "hammering off" his thousandth bow on the stony floor of the church,—all exhibit that kind of piety which is very common among the Russians.

It springs as much from primitive heathenism as from the higher forms of monotheism. Religious feeling is, with them, so to speak, crumbled up into a number of disjointed fragments. Of the powerful integration which transforms it into an all-absorbing passion that carries all before it, the bulk of the orthodox peasantry knows nothing now, and never has known anything.

This does not mean that the Russian peasants are by nature inclined to religious indifference. They have their full share of the human faculty for intense enthusiasm, which, in dealing with masses, is most readily converted into religious zeal. The history of our sects, old and new, is there to prove it.

All we wish to point out is that with the orthodox Russian peasantry, which up to the present day has formed three-quarters of our rural population, religious feeling is almost entirely dormant. Fortunately for us, Byzantine orthodoxy was unable to call forth, or to permanently

hold, more than a quite insignificant quantity of this emotional force, a quantity so small that we may ignore it.

It has lain there, hidden in the breasts of the toiling millions, as an enormous potential force, which, however, may be awakened some day, and appear as a new and important agent of our national history. We, for our part, venture to express the opinion that here, in the presence of this latent force, which has never yet been tested, lies perhaps the greatest enigma of Russia's future.

It is not at all improbable that Russia may never have a great religious movement of her own, like those which stand between the Middle Ages and the new centuries in Europe. The positive sciences have clipped the wings of the supernatural throughout the civilized world, and there is perhaps no country where the whole of the educated classes are so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of free thought as are the Russians. Now, it is quite impossible that this fact should have no influence over the popular mind. The intellectual barriers between the upper and lower classes are rapidly disappearing. Nowadays the most gifted among the peasants—the future

leaders of the masses—can grope their way towards light and knowledge. Contact with modern civilisation must needs blunt the edge and destroy the freshness of the faith which can work miracles and move mountains only when in its full bloom.

Russia may skip over this phase of social development, for which she has come too late; she may gradually enter into that period wherein those precious and sublime faculties of man's soul, love and self-denial, will be spent directly on works of love and truth, ennobling and exalting human life, instead of being stored up and petrified in the region of ethereal skies.

On the other hand, we see that our peasantry, in its intellectual awakening, shows a remarkable tendency to run into religious channels. Dumb and inert in the domain of politics, it is in the founding of religious sects that our peasantry has formulated its most cherished ideals and social aspirations. Here they exhibit, not only great intellectual activity, but also unlimited moral energy. With a wider and more energetic awakening of the popular intelligence, either before, or during, or even the day after our political crisis, the fervent genius of religion,

stified heretofore under the blankets of orthodox ritualism, may awaken likewise.

No great national movement is possible unless the aspirations of the masses are shared by the educated classes. Yet even when confined to the masses, religion is capable of developing into issues of the greatest magnitude.

One thing is however certain: whether extensive or limited, primary or unimportant, the religious element, when it eventually steps to the front, will not do so under the auspices of orthodoxy.

The history of the awakening of the religious sentiment in various sections of the Russian people is, from this point of view, very instructive.

THE RASCOL.

CHAPTER 1.

IN the year 1659 Patriarch Nikon, then the head of the Russian Church, issued a new edition of the mass-book, or missal, revised and carefully corrected according to the old Slavonic and Greek originals. This was not the first occasion on which the Muscovite Tzars and Patriarchs had busied themselves with proof-reading. When the printing-press was introduced into Muscovy, and the publication of the sacred books was resolved upon, the Muscovite people discovered to their great mortification that the manuscript copies used in various dioceses presented many discrepancies, and sometimes even complete distortions of the original text. These errors were corrected as far as it lay in the power of the ignorant *pops*, appointed to superintend the printing business, to correct them.

During the Patriarchate of Joseph, the predecessor of Nikon, a special commission was nominated for a new revision of the sacred books.

Some of the eloquent and influential leaders in the future schism formed part of this commission—Protopop, Avvakum, Neronoff, Login, and others. The result of their labour was a text which is said by connoisseurs to be a fine example of idiomatic Slavonian, though still but a poor performance as far as correctness went.

Patriarch Nikon and Tzar Alexis resolved to crown the edifice, and bestow upon the Muscovite people a text and a ritual to which no exceptions could be taken. They proceeded with all the care and circumspection the importance of the work required. Learned scholars, both Russian and foreign, were summoned to Moscow; the best and oldest manuscripts were procured from the libraries of Mount Athos and other Oriental monasteries and churches. The Patriarch superintended the work, and the Tzar, who took the liveliest interest in it, warmly assisted him. No pains were spared to make the work good and authoritative. The revisers proved themselves thoroughly competent, and produced a text which modern Russian philologists pronounce to be perfectly reliable.

The chief corrections introduced into the text of the various scriptural books, gradually issued

by the ecclesiastical authorities, need not detain us here. Of religion, the Russians of Nikon's time knew nothing beyond that which they heard of saw in the churches, to which they trooped on great occasions. The schism was provoked by the changes introduced by Nikon in the mass-book. Let us now examine in what they consisted.

The most important innovation, which afterwards became the symbol and the war-cry of the religious rebellion, referred to the position of the fingers in making the sign of the cross. The Russians of Nikon's time when they crossed themselves held two fingers together, whilst the Oriental churches and the Greeks enjoined their adherents to cross themselves with three fingers united into one point. The two-fingered cross of the Muscovites was used in the Orient only for giving the priestly benediction. The *ikons* of the saints of clerical grade are usually represented in the act of conferring this benediction, which was doubtless the cause of the universal acceptance of this form of making the sign of the cross in Russia.

Patriarch Nikon was anxious to return to ancient traditions. Reserving the two-fingered cross for priestly benedictions only, he re-esta-

blished the three-fingered Greek cross, or, as his opponents called it, "the pinch-of-snuff cross," for the private act of devotion.

Then, too, in certain cases, for instance in stamping the round wafers, he introduced the use of the equilateral, four-sided cross (similar to the Swiss or Crusader's cross), as the Greeks were wont to do, whilst the Russians of this time never departed from the original normal cross, modelled after that on which Christ was crucified—a long stem with shorter transverse beams.

The Russians celebrated the mass on seven wafers, whilst the Greeks and Orientals used only five.

In the processions of the church, the Russians were in the habit of first turning their steps westward—going *with the sun*; the Greeks marched eastward—*against the sun*. In all these points Patriarch Nikon conformed to the traditions of the Greek Mother-Church. In conformity with this rule, moreover, he directed that the Halleluiahs should be "trebled," or sung thrice, as with the Greeks, the Russians having up till then only "doubled" it,—singing, instead of the third halleluiahs, its Russian equivalent, "God be praised." Finally, or we should rather say above

all, Nikon introduced a fresh spelling of the name of Jesus. The fact is that, probably in consequence of the Russian habit of abbreviating some of the commonest scriptural names, the second letter in the name Jesus had been dropped altogether ; it was simply spelt Jsus, without any sign of abbreviation. Patriarch Nikon corrected this orthographical error, replacing the missing letter.

Was this all? Yes, this was all. As far as doctrinal matters were concerned nothing more serious was at stake in the great religious schism of the seventeenth century, known by the name of *Rascol*.

And yet it was for these trifles—a letter less in a name ; a finger more in a cross ; the doubling instead of the trebling of a word—that thousands of people, both men and women, encountered death on the scaffold or at the stake. It was for these things that other scores of thousands underwent the horrible tortures of the knout, the strappado, the rack, or had their bodies mutilated, their tongues cut, their hands chopped off.

Saddening, sickening sight, unredeemed and unsoothed by that mingled feeling of respect and thankfulness which we bring to the shrines of

the martyrs and champions in the great cause of humanity! It seems impossible to discover what human or national interest could have been served by the numberless victims and heroes of the *Rascol* struggles, which read more like a bloody farce than a great historical tragedy.

For a long time the *Rascol* remained a great and unsolved riddle to all the investigators of our national life. It puzzled by the fierce fanaticism and unlimited spirit of self-sacrifice which it roused for the sake of trifles so utterly irrelevant. It puzzled still more by the fact of its influence having been spread over a mass of from ten to fifteen millions of people, and by the extraordinary tenacity of its hold. Scholars could only marvel that a kind of mental craze should thus stand the test of two centuries, constantly gaining ground over the certainly more rational views of official orthodoxy.

The honour of throwing the light of science on this the darkest problem of our history, and of unravelling the standing enigma of the *Rascol*, belongs to the last twenty to twenty-five years, and is one of the most brilliant triumphs of modern Russian historiography. Attracted by the magnitude of this purely popular movement,

some of our best historians—Shchapov, and Kostomarov at their head—made the *Rascol* a special object of long and patient study. They threaded their way through the contradictions and perplexities of that strange and complicated movement; and they have shown it to be, not an outburst of callous obscurantism and sordid reaction, but a striking illustration of the peculiar and crooked paths by which the human spirit sometimes marches from darkness into light. The common conclusion come to, as summed up by Kostomarov, is, that, “far from being a reactionary movement, the *Rascol* was an important step in the intellectual progress of our people” (‘Monograph,’ vol. viii.).

Such words sound strange when applied to a rebellion in favour of the absolute immutability of ancient traditions, and absolute negation of the right to criticise even so much as the spelling of the Scriptures. But nevertheless so it is, and the seemingly strange views on the *Rascol*, advocated by the modern historical school, possess that quality of forcible persuasiveness which is proper to all really scientific discoveries.

To begin with, there is one consideration which at once exonerates our *Rascolniks* from the charge

of exceptional narrow-mindedness. We have only to reverse our position, and to look on the history of the *Rascol* from the opposite point of view. If it is strange that people should die for the sake of an orthographical blunder, is it not equally strange that their opponents, the dominant Church party, comprising all the best educated amongst the clergy and society, should burn, hang, and decapitate hundreds and thousands of their fellow-creatures, and ruin and devastate entire provinces for questions so utterly unimportant?

Indignation at disobedience accounted for much in these fierce persecutions. Despotism, both secular and ecclesiastical, was provoked by the impudence of benighted *moujiks* who dared to reason for themselves on questions of faith and Scripture. But, though this might account for a few fitful acts of violence, it is not sufficient to account for half a century's uninterrupted struggle, which strained all the resources of the State, and which brought on the government incalculable harm. It is evident that the dominant Church party, with the Tzar and the Patriarch at its head, considered the corrections they had made just as essential to the interests

of true religion as did the *Rascolniks* the maintenance of the old forms. Where the two parties differed was, as to which really were the ancient and true rites and forms of orthodoxy. In their conception as to what actually constituted true religion both the contending parties were agreed. They both believed in the efficacy of the rite as such, and therefore were both firmly convinced that the slightest inaccuracy would render it null and void before the face of the Lord,—a standard of religion which forcibly recalls that of the orthodox peasants of the present day, which we described in the previous chapter.

The two forms of religion present an evident affinity. The study of the one is exceedingly useful towards a right understanding of the other. We realize the *Rascol* more vividly when we look at it through the medium of modern popular religion; whilst on the other hand the study of the *Rascol* helps us to a better comprehension of the state of religious thought amongst our rural contemporaries. With the *moujiks* this curious phase of the religious idea is still a living thing, a fact standing there in the full bloom of its reality. But it is confined exclusively to the class which tills the soil, illiterate people for the most part,

who have neither the leisure nor the habit of mind to fit them for abstract speculation. They cannot think abstract questions out logically, and therefore cannot give them adequate expression. Besides, the peasantry of to-day is no longer intellectually on a uniform level. Groups and individuals, representing more advanced religious phases, are to be met with everywhere. Small in number, they yet are likely to attract the attention of an outsider, and would be apt to confound and mislead him in making his observations. In the seventeenth century Muscovites of all ranks and classes were as uniform in their religious ideas as only an uncultured nation can be. The documents referring to the ecclesiastical history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, anterior to the great ritualistic schism, supply us with perfect examples of this christianised fetishism—crystallized as hard as granite, unyielding and ferocious, like all absolute religious convictions.

Some of our scholars, Kostomarov among them, ascribe this uninspiring form of Christianity to a certain superficiality and formalism inborn in the Great Russians (Muscovites).

It is an open question whether the Great Russians really have this tendency or not ; their

social and political life shows a marked, nay, often an injudicious repugnance to any formalism whatever, whilst, as far as the domain of speculation is concerned, the Russians as a race certainly exhibit no peculiar proclivity for sticking to details and exterior forms. Then why should they be pronounced to be by nature narrow and formal in their religion? It is always safer not to fall back upon a far-fetched hypothesis, when a thing can be accounted for as a simple stage in natural development.

We must indeed upset all our ideas as to the natural and organic development of the human mind if we are to suppose that the wholesale conversion to Christianity, of tribes and nations can be anything but fictitious and superficial.

Barbarians, whether they were the Franks under Clovis, or the Saxons under Alfred, or the Russians under Vladimir of Kieff, after having spent one short quarter of an hour in the water of a river, which may have washed a little dirt from their bodies, could not have had their minds cleansed from all the ideas acquired and inherited from centuries. Fetish-worshippers as they were, they could do nothing more than clothe their national fetishism in a Christian garb. And this

they did. The *Popes* of Rome issued dozens of bulls of excommunication against the observers of old heathen ceremonies. The chroniclers of the 'Middle Ages' utter complaints against them. The same story was lived through in Western Europe as it had been in Eastern.

These early conquests of the cross remind us of the solemnity of taking possession of the main, as practised by the Spaniards and other Europeans in the 'New World, rather than of real conversions. Then, under the protection of friendly standards, a stream of new ideas began to penetrate into the popular mind, side by side with the elements of general culture. So exceedingly slow is the process that even now it is not perfected. In countries, which can count fifteen hundred years of official Christianity, there remain sections of the population which still retain many of the features of primitive christianised heathenism.

In Western Europe, however, as well as in the Ruthenian (Southern Russian) provinces, where the banner of Lithuania and Catholic Poland was followed, the authorized spokesmen of religion stood, intellectually, far above the masses. The Catholic priests and monks were

acquainted with Latin, and preserved in part their inheritance of the high philosophy and culture of antiquity. Thus, in Europe generally, the theological efforts of the popular mind were kept in check and confined to their own spheres, and branded wholesale with the name of "superstition," whilst in Russia they were converted into "orthodox Christianity."

The Greek clergy, which did so much towards spreading Christianity over the Slavonic world, was likewise the bearer of the rudiments of culture. This culture very readily struck root among the Russians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but was swept away again by the invasion of the Asiatic nomads and the three centuries of desperate struggle which followed.

By this struggle all intellectual pursuits were interrupted. The clergy gave up the study of Greek, which in those days was the vehicle of culture; they even forgot old Slavonic, into which the Scriptures had been translated, and in which the Liturgy was celebrated. To know how to read grew to be a rare accomplishment, which most of the rural clergy did not possess, and they therefore learned the Liturgy from their predecessors by rote and from ear. Some of the

cultivated Bishops felt much grieved at having to consecrate these illiterate men, sent to them by the village Communes, but they could find no substitutes, and had to decide between leaving the village without a minister at all or consecrating those who were unable to read one word of the Scriptures.

Thus, whilst Western Europe steadily progressed in her culture, emerging about the sixteenth century from the barbarity of the Middle Ages, Russia relapsed into a state of almost primitive savagery. Religion necessarily followed the same retrogressive movement. It relapsed into its primitive state, and would have been well suited to the intelligence of the converts made by St. Vladimir and his early followers. With this difference, however: Christianity was no longer a mere garb, donned to please a popular prince, and to be thrown off again whilst heathenism was resumed with perfect ease of mind, a proceeding of which there have been several examples in our early history.

Orthodoxy gained ground in the nation, and at last grew to be a part of its very flesh and bones. For six centuries orthodoxy was identified with the life of the nation. In the most solemn and tragic moments of our history—when

struggling desperately with the sword and by statecraft against the overwhelming power of the Tartars for the right of calling their bodies and goods their own, or when defending the State and the integrity of the Empire against the Poles and Swedes—the Russians always had to face enemies of another creed, as well as of another nationality. Whenever they met on a peaceful footing with aliens, they found them different—save a mere handful of Greeks—in creed as well as in speech and race. Orthodoxy became confounded with the idea of nationality.

“Russian” and “*provoslavny*” (orthodox) became synonyms, the latter priming the former. Up to the present time orthodox peasants, amongst whom there happens to be a settlement of dissenters, will say, pointing out some group of houses or some village: “Such and such villages or families are *Molokane* or *Dukhoborzy*, and we are *Russians*,” i.e., orthodox. To give up orthodoxy means to forsake the Russian nationality, to cease to be a Russian. Many dissenters concur in this view. They call the orthodox Church, the Russian Church, and the orthodox, Russians,—as if they themselves did not belong to that nation.

The old Muscovites were exceedingly sensitive to any wrong or disrespect shown towards orthodoxy. Whenever it was threatened in any way, the people rose as one man, and achieved miracles to preserve undefiled what was to them the highest embodiment of their national self-consciousness.

Patriotism is a powerful feeling when called into action ; under ordinary circumstances, however, this feeling of national self-love is a quiet sentiment, defensive rather than impulsive. Whatever be the national peculiarity on which it prides itself the most, be it religion, language, or constitution, it is roused to activity only when some danger threatens the thing cherished. When in the secure enjoyment of its idol it naturally keeps quiet and slumbers. The ancient Muscovites cleaved to all customs bequeathed to them by their forefathers : to the habit of wearing long beards, for example, which they held sacred. When Peter the Great ordered all beards to be shorn, this mandate produced an indignant and lasting opposition, which culminated in 1707 in a regular "beard insurrection" in Astrakhan. Before the issue of this *ukaz*, however, and so long as neither razor nor scissors

threatened the luxuriant growth on men's chins, why should the Muscovites make more fuss about their beards than other people did?

• Passing from small things to great, we may say that so it was with religion. It was felt to be an attribute of the whole nation, without being in any sense an individual impulse. Hence that seemingly strange contradiction, which was in reality no contradiction at all—their striking readiness to stand by their religion to the last drop of their blood, and at the same time the no less striking religious indifference in their everyday life, and utter carelessness in the fulfilment of their religious duties—facts abundantly proved by the records of the epoch.

They did not observe the rites of the Church; many among both laymen and clergymen were in the habit of living with women unwedded; they did not attend at church, save at very great solemnities; the churches stood empty, and the clergy, who were addicted to much drinking and bad living, sometimes did not celebrate the mass for months together. Preaching was dropped altogether, except that the Patriarch preached occasionally. The practice of preaching was not re-established among the inferior clergy until

much later, in the time of Peter the Great, when the newcomers, the orthodox Ruthenian priests, resumed the practice. The service was conducted in a manner which well illustrated the people's indifference to it; two or three different songs were sung at the same time, or several parts of the Liturgy read simultaneously, so that nothing could be understood. The congregation talked, laughed, and quarrelled during the service, and came and went freely, standing with their heads covered, and they kept neither fasts nor Sundays.

When the great Boyar, Morosov, the confidant of Tzar Alexis, who was a great churchgoer, tried to compel his peasants to go regularly to church, and not to work on Sundays, he almost provoked a rebellion. The steward of his estate reported to him that "the peasants were secretly working at their own homes on Sundays, and refused to give up the habit, because in the neighbouring village of Alexeevka, and all around them, the people worked on Sundays. Neither would they go to church: on St. Peter's Day none of them attended at God's Temple." The Boyar made his injunctions more stringent, giving orders that those who remained obdurate should be fined and flogged. The steward reported that

at the meeting convened to hear their master's message the peasants were quite angry with him, and shouted, "It is all your doing! It is you that have reported against us to our master, in order to compel us to pray often!" And they began to assemble in large crowds and to look defiant, "and I fear," adds the unwilling propagator of piety, "they may be meditating my death."

CHAPTER II.

IT was a moment of severe trial to the Muscovites when the Patriarch Nikon sent his new missal with all its sweeping innovations to all the churches and chapels of the Empire. Traditional ritualism and the no less traditional indifferentism came into collision with one another, and had to show which would prove the stronger of the two. Had the proposed reforms emanated from the outside, or had there been any ground for the suspicion that it had been borrowed from or suggested by foreigners, one tenth of the changes introduced would have sufficed to make the whole country rise in wrath and indignation, and eject both the Patriarch and his mass-book. Nikon's enemies knew this, and exerted themselves strenuously to prove that his "novelties" were pure Romish popery. But this trick would not hold water.

There was no ground for suspecting the slightest treason to the national cause in a

measure started under the auspices of a Tzar like Alexis, and a Patriarch like Nikon. Tzar Alexis Mikhailovitch was a model Tzar, to whom no exception could be taken ; * though Patriarch Nikon had many enemies amongst the clergy, partly owing to his great severity in exposing their evil conduct, and partly owing to his personal arrogance and cruelty. The bulk of the population, however, neither knew nor cared about these family quarrels.

Nikon was by far the strongest and cleverest man who had occupied the ecclesiastical throne of the Moscow Patriarchate since its first creation. There was much to admire in his manly character, notwithstanding his obvious shortcomings, and he was vastly popular with the great mass of laymen.

It must have seemed preposterous to suppose that such a man could become a traitor to the national cause, and a convert to popery, or any other foreign heresy. This patriotic feeling, so powerfully represented in Muscovite orthodoxy, and constituting its impulsive element,

* The intense popular sufferings, which gave rise to so many rebellions during this reign, were always attributed to the wickedness of the Tzar's officials,

gave no response to the call; whilst religious feeling as such, *i.e.*, the attachment of the individual to orthodoxy as an element of spiritual life, 'was at' this period so feeble within the masses as to be hardly perceptible at all. If powerful religious emotions were to be called forth from the innermost recesses of men's hearts, some more potent spell would be needed than the contemplation of the eight-pointed cross, or than listening to a nasal "double" halleluiah.

The first apostles of this religious schism had to cry in a veritable wilderness, confronted with an absolute indifference on the part of all who surrounded them.

At a distance of two centuries we have considerable difficulty in preserving the historical perspective. Events which happened at short but perfectly noticeable intervals of time, when viewed at close quarters, seem, when viewed from a distance, to cover one another like the visible objects on the verge of the horizon.

The *Rascol* is usually represented as a stormy and widespread outburst of popular discontent at the sight of Nikonian "innovations." It was not so in reality. To be convinced of this we have only to pay some attention to the dates, which in

historical investigations are as important as in a Court of Justice. The fact is that the Nikonian mass-book, with all its bold "innovations," was at first universally accepted. It was certainly exceedingly distasteful to almost the whole body of churchgoers, but they did not move a finger to protest against it, and quietly submitted to orders coming from Moscow, as was their wont.

At the Moscow Council of 1654, convened to hear the new mass-book and to give it the official sanction of the Church, only two members dared to openly express their disapprobation. These two were the *pop* Avvacum and Paul of Kolomna. Outside the Council a handful of pops and monks joined them; the laymen kept entirely out of the way. During the first twelve years after the promulgation of the new missal, that is, up to the Council of 1666-7, the opposition to Nikon's reforms was solely represented by a small body of monks and *pops*, with a very feeble following among the laymen.

The Council of 1666-7 pushed the unsophisticated and simple-minded orthodox literally to the wall. At this solemn assembly, presided over by two Eastern Patriarchs—those of Alexandria and of Antioch—the advocates of two-fingered

crossing, double halleluiahs, and old uncorrected missals were excommunicated and anathematised in a body—"Their souls, in virtue of the power given to the Church by Jesus Christ, to be given up to eternal torments, together with the souls of the traitor Judas, and of the Jews by whom Jesus Christ was crucified."

This was rather too strong even for those days of petty formalism. The famous Council, in the excess of its zeal, had overstepped the mark, and had done the utmost that could be done in the domain of spiritual influence to trouble the consciences of the faithful, and to disseminate doubts about official orthodoxy, thus pushing the people into the *Rascol*.

All the generations of the past, all the Saints, the holy Patriarchs, and the early Czars, had used the same books and the same rites as were now condemned as heretical. The deduction from this was obvious, and must have struck even the unsophisticated intellects of the people,—if those who stuck to the unrevised missals were doomed to eternal damnation now, why, then the same fate must have befallen their forebears likewise. The *Rascolniks* repeatedly pointed out to their opponents and persecutors the following simple consideration, which must have suggested itself to

everybody. "If you anathematise us," they said, "you likewise anathematise your own forefathers and all the holy men of the past."

The number of those who were able to think for themselves was exceedingly small. To the bulk of the clergy and of the people it was a question of reliance on some authority. Now, in the choice between the whole of the past, with all its holiness, and the few clerks of the present, who quarrelled among themselves and deposed and cursed one another, no hesitation could be possible. Placed between the horns of this dilemma a common man, who took a lively interest in religious questions, could not help becoming a sympathiser and abettor of the *Rascol*. If he was endowed with a religious temperament he had the stuff in him of which its apostles and martyrs were made. Yet the *Rascol* was as slow to spread as fire over wood soaked in water, for there were so few in Russia who cared to think about religion at all. The rebels of the Solovezk monastery—a body of three hundred clerks and two hundred laymen—represented the main strength of the *Rascol* during the first quarter of a century after it had been officially proclaimed by the Nikonians.

In 1682-84, sixteen years after the meeting of the Council which rent the Church in twain, and about twenty-five years after the promulgation of the new mass-book, Moscow became the centre of great public troubles, which present to us the rare opportunity of gaining an insight into the genuine feelings and dispositions of the usually dumb masses. During the first tumultuous rising of the *Strelzy*, which occurred in 1682, the *Rascolniks* were nowhere. Among the many grievances which the *Strelzy* laid before the regents not a word was uttered as to religious persecution. It is very evident that the *Rascolniks* were at that time too thinly disseminated among the bulk of the people to be represented at all in a spontaneous movement composed of elements taken at random from amongst the population of the Capital. They were active people, these early *Rascolniks*, keenly alive to the interests of their creed, and able to make all winds fill their sails. Profiting by a temporary lull in the persecutions directed against them, they began an active agitation among the *Strelzy* and the people of Moscow, and got up a petition and huge riotous demonstrations in their favour. But they made few converts. People who consented to back

their cause were not in the least in sympathy with their creed. The *Strelzy* refused to sign the *Rascolniks'* profession of faith. "Still," they said, "we will not permit the authorities to burn and torture people for adherence to the old creed," and all joined in the demonstration. They pitied the men, remaining the while quite indifferent to the question of old or new creed.

The whole enterprise collapsed; the crowd succeeded in obtaining a stormy and uproarious debate on religion, which resulted in nothing but mutual recrimination. Tzarevna Sophia had no difficulty in destroying the temporary alliance between the *Rascolniks* and the *Strelzy*. "Are you not ashamed," she said to the deputies of the *Strelzy* at a confidential meeting, "to desert us, the Tzar's children, for the sake of half-a-dozen monks?" And the *Strelzy* felt ashamed, and gave the following characteristic answer: "We have nothing to do with the defence of the old faith, most gracious Tzarevna. That is the Patriarch's business, not ours." They were faithful representatives of the spirit of their comrades, who also considered religion to be "the business of the Patriarchs." The following day the more prominent among the *Rascolniks* were arrested,

their leaders executed, and nobody moved. The *Rascolniks* were not a force even in Moscow. They knew this, and showed their discernment in the great moderation of the demands they formulated. All they asked for was a little toleration. There was not as yet, in the *Rascol* as a body, any spirit of wild fanaticism and implacable hatred towards the dominant creed. They humbly petitioned that people should be suffered to save their souls with the aid of the same books and rites their forefathers and all the holy Patriarchs and Tzars of the past had used before them. Had these demands been conceded, even at this late hour, the growth of the *Rascol* would have been checked, and the spirit of religious rebellion would gradually have softened and melted away, swamped by the flood of general indifference.

But neither the jealous, narrow-minded clergy of the orthodox Church nor the government were prepared to grant toleration. The Moscow riots well over, and the authority of the State re-established, Tzarevna Sophia initiated a persecution against the rebels to the Church and to her authority, which may be compared to those of the pagan emperors against the early Christians.

All the officers of the Administration and of the police, had orders, under pain of heavy punishment, to proceed to the discovery and extermination of the *Rascol*. As soon, therefore, as these officials heard that in their respective districts there were people who did not attend mass, or who declined to admit the *pops* into their houses, or who absented themselves in any sense from the sacraments of the orthodox Church, they apprehended them, put them to the torture, and questioned them as to who had converted them to the *Rascol*, and as to who were their co-religionists. All those whose names were mentioned during these investigations had to be put to the torture in their turn, and so forth. Those *Rascolniks* who proved obstinate and impenitent were burned alive. Those who recanted were knouted and set free; but if they relapsed into heresy a second time no mercy might be shown them, and they were burnt, even though they recanted a second time.

The extreme section of the *Rascol*—the so-called "Re-baptists," who proclaimed the inefficiency of the Baptism administered by the orthodox—were placed in the same category as the recidivists; they were consigned to the

stake even if they repented. The avowedly orthodox, who showed little zeal in the cause of the Church, and did not apprehend the *Rascolniks* within their reach and deliver them up to the authorities, were knouted and fined according to the extent of their carelessness; whilst those who had *Rascolniks* lodging under their roofs, even though unaware of the fact, were punished with fines. If a relative or a friend of an imprisoned *Rascolnik* brought him nourishment or inquired after him, he was arrested and knouted.

This was a war of extermination, and in it the *Rascolniks* were pushed to the wall, and had to choose between the sacrifice of their faith and the sacrifice of their lives. Thousands perished; others fled in all directions, seeking refuge for themselves and their creed in the wildest and most deserted parts of the country, on the extreme verge of the Empire, or in the vast tracts of uninhabited land in the interior. Some crossed the Ural Mountains and settled in Siberia; others found new homes among foreigners, and established colonies in Sweden, in Poland, and in the Caucasus. The inclement north, the shores of the Frozen Ocean, and the region of the great seas of the North-West—which now form the

provinces of Archangelsk, Vologda, and Olonezk—were the places to which converged the main stream of *Rascolnik* colonization.

In these vast wildernesses, covered with impenetrable forests, infested with wild animals, and cut up by deep seas, rivers, and marshes, the *Rascolniks* were better protected than anywhere else. But even here their persecutors did not leave them in peace.

The government started a regular chase after them, and in 1687 issued a special *ukaz*, commanding the authorities of all the northern regions "to look to it carefully that the *Rascolniks* did not dwell in the woods, and that whenever they were heard of, a body of armed men should be despatched in pursuit, so that their refuges might be discovered and destroyed and their property confiscated, and every man, woman, and child apprehended, in order that their abominable heresy might be exterminated without any chance of revival."

In 1689 this order was repeated in terms more stringent still, under the penalty of death for negligence.

Special officers were appointed for superintending the hunt after *Rascolniks*.

In 1693 there was issued another *ukaz* to the

same effect, with an amendment with respect to their buildings and property: everything was to be burned to the ground, "in order that their companions should nowhere find any refuge."

This Draconian policy towards the *Rascolniks* was persisted in for more than thirty years without relaxation. Hunted down from one part of the country to another, the *Rascolniks* were scattered far and wide through the land and spread the seeds of their creed.

The torpor of the people was broken. The impudent appeal to brute force in matters of such delicacy, and so dear to men's souls, began to produce its wonted effect. The masses began to stir; the unprecedented persecution of men and women of unquestioned morality, who met their trials with such fortitude, began to tell even on the wooden nerves of their contemporaries. The two fingers—the emblem of the *Rascolnik's* cross and creed—shown to the awe-struck crowd from amidst the flames of the stake, produced a stronger effect than the preaching or arguing of any number of *Rascolniks* could have done. Thus was the scarcely perceptible spark of earnest religious exaltation in old Muscovy, in fifty years fanned into a huge conflagration.

¹Kostomarov has preserved from among the judicial documents of the epoch a graphic account of a case, in the reading of which we seem to be able to put our finger on the very root of the question, and to realize at once how and why the *Rascol* became so contagious.

“It was in Tumen, a town in Western Siberia; time, Sunday morning. The *pops* were celebrating the mass in the cathedral on the lines of the new missals, as usual. The congregation was listening calmly to the service, when, at the moment of the solemn appearance of the consecrated wafer, a female voice shouted, ‘Orthodox! do not bow! They carry a dead body—the wafer’ is stamped with the unholy cross, the seal of Antichrist.’

“The speaker was a female *Rascolnik*, accompanied by a male co-religionist of hers, who thus interrupted the service. The man and woman were seized, knouted in the public square, and thrown into prison. But their act produced its effect. When another *Rascolnik*, the monk Danilo, shortly after appeared on the same spot and began to preach, an excited crowd at once gathered around him. His words affected his audience so deeply that girls and old women began to see the skies

open above them, and the Virgin Mary with the angels holding a crown of glory over those who refused to pray as they were ordered by the authorities. Danilo persuaded them to flee into the wilderness for the sake of the true faith. Three hundred people, both men and women, joined him, but a strong body of armed men was sent in pursuit. They could not escape, and Danilo seized the moment to preach to them, and persuade them that the hour had come for all of them to receive 'the baptism of fire.' By this he meant they were to burn themselves alive. They accordingly locked themselves up in a big wooden shed, set fire to it, and perished in the flames—all the three hundred with their leader."

This awful instance of self-immolation was not unique.

Every *Rascolnik* who fell into the hands of the orthodox was doomed to the stake unless he abjured his faith. The majority, who were "Re-baptizers," had not even this base means of escape. It was better and nobler to die at once for the glory of the faith than to fall a prey to their enemies, and to die in passing through the long ordeal of frightful tortures. Religious ideas were blent together with the impulses of manly

Death at the stake was the baptism by fire which Christ bestowed on the faithful; it was the Prophet's chariot of fire, which was to carry their souls straight to heaven. Overflowing religious exaltation created a yearning after martyrdom. This is unmistakably shown by some of the more terrible self-inflicted *auto-da-fe*.

On the Sea of Ladoga, on a small island, there stands an orthodox monastery, which bears the name of *Paleostrovsky*. The place was particularly hateful to the surrounding *Rascolniks*, because the monks who dwelt there, and who knew the locality thoroughly, always guided the invading parties to the *Rascolnik* settlements. In 1688, when the persecutions were at their height, and a party of the most fierce champions of the orthodox faith was devastating the *Rascolnik* settlements in the Onega district, a *Rascolnik* monk, Ignatius of Solovezk by name, conceived the idea of achieving a great holocaust for the glory of the true faith. At the head of a great crowd, armed with bludgeons and axes, he passed the frozen lake, drew off the Paleostrovsky monks, put Ensign Gleboff and his soldiers to precipitous flight, and took possession of the monastery.

For several months the *Rascolniks* stood their

ground. The troops, a battalion of infantry and guns, did not arrive from Novgorod, the head quarters of that region, until Lent. When the soldiers marched to the assault, the *Rascolniks* locked themselves up in the big wooden church, which they had previously filled with a great quantity of bituminous matter and very combustible wood. The windows, too, were carefully closed with thick boards, so that when the troops broke into the monastery and began to pick holes in the walls of their refuge, the *Rascolniks* set fire to it and burnt themselves to death. In all they numbered 2,700. The number has probably been magnified by *Rascolnik* historians. The orthodox authorities reduce the figures for this first Paleostrovsky "locking up" to 1,500.

The monastery was rebuilt, and the orthodox monks reinstalled in it; but a few years later the *Rascolniks* were once more seized with the wild desire to repeat the same act of faith in this stronghold of the Nikonians. In this second "locking up" the besieged *Rascolniks* challenged the Nikonians to sham debates on religious questions, and used various other devices in order to gain time, and to receive into their midst those of the inhabitants of the

surrounding villages who were also anxious "to win the martyr's diadem," but for some reason or other could not arrive in time for the "locking up." It is reported that the few whom the soldiers pulled out of the flames with boathooks showed themselves sorely aggrieved at their rescue. They regarded it as a proof that God considered them to be the greatest among sinners, and would not accept a sacrifice at their hands. The number of victims in this second Paleostrovsky "locking up" was also about 1,500.

Religious mania could go no further. About ten thousand people, men and women together, met their deaths in this terrible way in the North of Russia only, during this long period of persecution. The number of those who perished on the scaffold, or in the torture-chamber, or in dungeons, must have been still greater.

But the *Rascol* was no longer extinguishable. Its members grew red-hot in their religious ardour, which carried them triumphantly through two centuries, and stood the test of fire and sword, as well as of the incredible hardships of everyday life, which these people had to endure for the sake of their faith.

With all their zeal the authorities could not

succeed in finding out the hiding-places of *Rascolniks*. The vastness of the country, its peculiar topography, the great sparseness of the population, and the absence of roads, all combined to paralyse their efforts. Modern investigators of the *Rascol* state that even nowadays there exist in the virgin forests of Perm and Viatka whole villages of *Rascolniks* who are totally unknown to the authorities, and who live perfectly independently, paying no taxes and furnishing no conscripts for the army.

Two centuries ago such a state of things was yet easier to bring about. The *Rascolnik* settlers gathered together in these secluded hamlets were mostly destitute wanderers, without money, often only half clad, and but imperfectly provided with implements for work. They had to win a precarious livelihood from the ungrateful earth, struggling all the time with the severity of the Arctic winter and the wild beasts of the forest, with the constant additional anxiety of never feeling secure against their sudden discovery by the imperial soldiers and police. The noble courage and undaunted endurance displayed by the early *Rascolnik* pioneers is perhaps a more convincing, though less striking, illustration of

the religious fervour than those outbursts of mixed frenzy and despair which resulted in self-immolation.

The *Rascolniks* overcame everything. They established their small agricultural colonies on a permanent footing far and wide over the northern littoral, up to the woody slopes of the Urals.

Many of their colonists crossed the mountains and founded colonies on the Siberian main, and even beyond the dominion of the Niconians. Others again found shelter in the enormous virgin forests of the interior Provinces, Tchernigov, Novgorod, Orel, and others. In short, the *Rascol* conquered for itself a vast though fragmentary territory, and has never since lost it. This fact is of the greatest importance, and accounts for much in the whole history of the *Rascol* which would otherwise be perplexing,—its great stability as well as the social and political influence exercised by it on orthodox or official Russia.

From its very beginning, or rather from the moment when the *Rascol* was taken up by the peasantry, it was something more than an exclusively religious movement. There were only too many grievances, besides that of the compul-

sory introduction of a new ritual, to burden the minds of the people in the middle of the seventeenth century. The gradual subjection of the people to the nobility ; the centralisation of ecclesiastical power in the hands of the Bishops, to the prejudice of the parishes, which had formerly elected and controlled their own curates ; a corresponding suppression of local franchise, and the increasing abuses of bureaucratic centralisation ; the unprecedented overburdening of the people with taxes, in order to meet the growing expenditure of the unwieldy Empire,—all these evils were so many distinctive marks of the Tzar Alexis' reign.

A peasant converted into an apostle of the *Rascol*, and throwing his whole soul into his creed, could not keep silence on the wrongs inflicted on his kith and kin by the same hateful Nikonians who had corrupted the faith, whilst the ill-treatment of the Christians was only one more proof of the apostasy of the so-called Orthodox. Thus did political and economical discontent walk hand in hand with religious opposition.

The *Rascol* grew to be the embodiment of popular aspirations in their entirety, as opposed

to those which the bureaucratic State and Church forced upon the people. This much increased its attractiveness to the masses.

When the *Rascolniks* conquered a new territory for themselves, they were as a matter of course able to put their ideas into practice. They at once established there, a social and political order in accordance with the popular ideas of freedom, equality, and autonomy. The more numerous the *Rascolnik* settlements became, the better were they able to protect themselves against the government, either by bribery, by craft, or by the imposing display of their forces.

Up to quite recent times there have always been vast tracts of land, belonging to the *Rascolniks*, over which, protected by distance and topographical position, the State has practically wielded no authority whatever. Serfs no longer able to bear the yoke of slavery, soldiers or conscripts escaping from the rod of the drill-masters, criminals, insolvent tax-payers,—all found a safe refuge in the *Rascol* settlements, lost to the outside world in the depths of the trackless forests.

In former ages the discontented had repaired to the free steppes which bordered the Empire. Here, in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries,

arose the powerful military Republic of the Don Cossacks, with affiliated branches on the rivers Yaik and Volga. Many of the first *Rascolniks* followed the same well-known track, and found a warm welcome and safety amongst this warlike population.

It is a suggestive fact that nowhere else were the propagandists of the *Rascol* so successful as in these centres of social and political discontent. The Cossacks of the Don and Yaik sided in a body with the *Rascol*. Later on, under the leadership of Pugatchev, they fought its battles as well as those of the enslaved peasantry.

This terrible insurrection, which imperilled the Empire of Catherine II., was planned and got up in the *Rascolnik* monasteries of the Irghis. The Pretender fought under the standard on which the *Rascolnik* cross, with eight points, was emblazoned. In his proclamations he announced that to his people were granted, "with the cross and with the beard, cheap salt and free land, meadows, and fisheries." This was the joint programme of the religious and social rebellion.

Since the time of Peter the Great, the Cossacks, though maintaining their full autonomy, had no longer been allowed to receive fugitives from the

Ir provinces, in their midst. The hand of the Tzar had been laid heavily upon them since the bloody suppression of the Boulavin rising. The *Rascol* was the only outlet for the accumulated popular discontent excited by this tempestuous reign, which marks a new epoch in the history of the *Rascol* as in all other branches of our social and political life.

The total remoulding of the State ; the long and heavy wars ; the building of new towns ; the construction of new roads and new canals, demanded enormous sacrifices in men, money, and gratuitous work. It was a colossal investment, of which posterity has reaped the benefits, but its burden was often too heavy for the shoulders of contemporary men. Serfdom assumed a new and most hateful form ; the peasants, who had formerly "gone with" the soil, now became the private property of the masters. The conscription for the newly-created standing army was established. There were as many as forty levies during the reign of Peter the Great alone, five of which were throughout the country. Forty thousand people were ordered to come at their own expense to aid in the building of St. Petersburg, without counting those who dug the canals. The hated poll-tax

was established, and the money collected with great cruelty. Peter, in one of his *ukazes*, reprimands his officers for behaving so "coarsely" to the peasants that sometimes whole villages were dispersed. Indeed, they tortured their victims by the rope and by fire, and cast them out naked into the bitter frost.

The townspeople fared no better. Endless suffering was inflicted on them by the Tzar's capricious *ukazes* about changing their national dresses, saddles, boots, etc., which were always accompanied by threats of "capital punishment and the confiscation of all goods in the event of disobedience,"—the usual refrain of all these proclamations, of the impatient Tzar. It is easy to realize what a field was opened to abuses and plunder on the part of the officials by such Draconian prescriptions, which were often absolutely unexecutable, and always most unsuitable in our climate.

In addition to all this, there was only too much in the work of reformation undertaken by the great Emperor that deeply wounded the feelings as well as injured the material interests of the people. In his fiery, almost frenzied energy he made allowance for nothing and respected nothing;

he trampled down inveterate habits and sacred traditions for the sake of a hobby with as little compunction as when a masterly piece of statesmanship depended on it. He horrified the masses, who considered many of his orders to be nothing less than sacrilege. When Strelez Stepan, the prime mover in Boulavin's insurrection, arrived in Astrakhan from Moscow, he terrified the citizens by the report that the Tzar, who had recently returned from a visit to foreign countries, had ordered the people to "shave off their beards" (which was true), adding, by way of amplification, "and to bow down to idols." This latter mandate was, in the popular imagination, the natural outcome of the former.

Since the council of 1666 had pronounced an anathema against the old faith, the *Rascolniks* had announced that the reign of Antichrist had begun. The date of the council, 1666, was held to be a most clear confirmation of this view; for did it not combine the apocalyptical thousand years of Satan's bondage with the "number of the beast"? The popular theologians had no doubt whatever about it, and announced, on the authority of the same book, that as the reign of Antichrist was to last over three years, the end

of the world would therefore come in 1669. They fixed even the date of this portentous event. Some declared it would come about on the eve of Whitsunday, others at the same hour on the eve of Quinquagesima Sunday.

The discovery was striking enough to stir the popular imagination, and many took the bait. When, however, the fatal nights had passed over, and the whole of 1669 with them, and yet the world was left standing pretty much as before, the overbold prophets had to experience the usual meed of jokes and abuses from the disappointed people. Protopop Avvacum, the most prominent of the early *Rascolniks*, explained, as most unsuccessful oracles are wont to do, that his prophecy about the reign of Antichrist must be taken in a spiritual sense—that Antichrist had not yet come in the flesh, but that he reigned in the spirit in the contaminated Church.

With the advent to power of Peter the Great, the *Rascol* substituted for the spiritual Antichrist a living and strikingly concrete one in the person of the Tzar himself. A sovereign who strove to deprive the men of their likeness to God by taking off their beards; who had numbered the people in defiance of a clear prohibition of the Lord;

who changed the times of the years and the days, of the saints (introduction of the new calendar in place of the old one, which had begun the year on the 1st September); who had married an unchristened heathen (a Protestant, Catherine I.), and had had her crowned as Empress in the Church; who daily committed what was by the people regarded as sacrilege,—could not be other than Antichrist himself. A certain Talizin, merchant by occupation and *Rascolnik* by creed, was the first to formulate these views in writing. He was arrested, tortured, and condemned to be suffocated to death by smoke. But the idea struck root—it generated spontaneously in the minds of thousands.

Panic-stricken by the dread of Antichrist, and driven on by the unbearable hardships of their lives, scores of thousands of the peasants and artisans of the towns fled to the *Rascol's* settlements in search of bodily and spiritual safety.

During the first years of his reign, Tzar Peter persecuted the *Rascolniks* fiercely, seeing in them the mainstay of all his political opponents. But when he became convinced of their political harmlessness he left them alone. Religious intolerance was repugnant to his broad, secular

mind. Provided the *Rascolniks* paid a double poll-tax, they might pray after which fashion they chose.

The long war of extermination waged against the *Rascol* came to a standstill. It was far from being a complete peace. But the *Rascolniks* were no longer hunted down by the Government. Thenceforth they were able to make permanent homes for themselves, and to devote themselves to the ordinary pursuits of life—to business and to study. Their persecution became fitful, and was never carried to anything like the same excess as in former times.

Thus does the epoch of Peter the Great mark both the definite constitution of the *Rascol* as a separate creed, and also the starting-point of that curious sort of popular culture which the *Rascol* has developed.

CHAPTER III.

THE vast movement of popular thought known by the name of *Rascol*, and which extended over two centuries, was not an uniform one. It was composed of very many different currents of thought, and embodied many different sects, bitterly hostile to one another, and having in common only their hatred towards the dominant Church.

To describe and classify them is not an easy task. There were numberless "splits" among the *Rascolniks* of all denominations. Hundreds of sects were founded, destined sometimes to melt away again in a few years, sometimes to embrace some millions of adherents within their folds, and to give rise to further "splits" and sub-divisions.* Our *moujiks*, who are the most associative and orderly race of men, and combine together for all

* In the eighteenth century, according to our ecclesiastical writers, the number of sects known to the authorities reached to upwards of two hundred.

kinds of work almost as readily and naturally as do the bees for the construction of the honeycomb, seem to share with their brethen of the educated classes an absolute unruliness in the matter¹ of speculative thought,—that is, when they begin to have any at all. Orthodox peasants were wont to say that among the *Rascolniks* “every *moujik* formed a sect, and every *baba* (peasant women) a persuasion.” It was not so bad as this, of course, but there was a grain of truth in the imputation, especially in the more extreme and thoroughgoing sects.

The very earnestness of the people in their newly awakened yearning after religious truth, made it impossible that one mould should fit all. Their lights were scanty, but every man of strong individuality wished to grope his own way.

Few of these self-taught theologians yielded to the weight of established opinion, and when they began to preach their own, they invariably found at least a few people willing to accept their doctrine, and ready to cause a split. The big *Rascolnik* sects must not be considered as homogeneous bodies holding to one profession of faith, as do, for instance, the Western Protestant sects of various denominations.

With reference to our *Rascol*, the word "sect" will always mean a more or less numerous group of distinct creeds, having some common characteristics—a current of thought, rather than definite articles of belief.

We will not go into details, of course, and will only mention those few sects which tend to illustrate the *Rascol* as a whole, marking broadly some new departure in the history of their religious thought or religious emotions. We will begin with a few words about a very interesting group of mystic sects, which stand somewhat apart from the main current of the *Rascol*.

Whilst the newly-awakened religious enthusiasm of the masses found an outlet for its energies in the formation of the several branches of the ritualistic *Rascol*, a considerable fraction were gathered into sects having a far more exalted ideal, which left mere formal ritualism altogether behind. Their over-excited religious feelings longed for something more than the mere possession of true books, true rites, true *ikons*. The hearts of the faithful yearned to come to closer quarters with the object of their passionate worship. They were unsatisfied alike by the

records of past or the hope of future fellowship with God; they spurned the distance which separates the earth and sky, and dreamed that it might be possible to bring back the days when they were joined. The obedient imagination is never slow to answer to aspirations and longings of such intensity. The spontaneous shooting up of mystic sects of various kinds, which is always one of the phenomena of periods of general religious excitement, is the natural outcome of such a state of the public mind. The higher or lower standard of culture prevailing among the people determines the more or less refined or gross form in which this mysticism finds its manifestation. No wonder, then, that with the Russian peasants of two centuries ago mysticism assumed the grossest form of belief in the living incarnation of God, Christ, and the Holy Virgin.

There are indications in our ancient annals that erratic sects of this class have appeared sporadically almost since the first introduction of Christianity into Russia, but it is difficult to determine whether these are to be regarded as samples of Christian mysticism, or simply as the last refuge of some form of aboriginal or Finnish Shamanism, which had so strong an attraction for our people.

At all events, the vast spread of mystic sects among the Russian peasantry sprang from the excitement consequent on the great schism of the seventeenth century.

The founding of these sects is by regular tradition attributed to one Danilo Filipovitch, a peasant of the Province of Kostroma, who lived in the time of Nikon, and is represented as being a man of great piety. He spent many years in prayer in a cave near the Volga river, and in studying the old as well as the new missals. At last he put all of them into a sack and threw them into the river, declaring that "revelation came from the living God alone."

At a public gathering, where Danilo Filipovitch was surrounded by his followers, God Sabaoth descended upon him, and thenceforth took up His abode in his body; thus was Danilo Filipovitch God's first incarnation. This man had many disciples and worshippers who believed in him.

At a later date these sects developed into a vast secret society, disseminated far and wide through all the big towns and many of the provinces of the empire. They called themselves the *Christs*, but the orthodox derisively converted this name into *Chlists*, which in our language

means *Whips*. The name was appropriate, as self-flagellation played an important part in their religious rites. It is under this name—*Chlists*—that 'the sects belonging to this class are known among our people and to ecclesiastical history. Their ramifications are the "Jumpers," "Dancers," "Shaloputs," the *Skopzy*, and others. Most of them remained undiscovered, as the greatest secrecy was observed by all of them, and their existence was only 'accidentally revealed. Their *radenias*, or nightly worship, consisted in various practices calculated to excite the nerves and to raise their religious enthusiasm to fever-heat by artificial means, such as by dancing round with their eyes fixed on their living Christs or Virgin Marys seated in their midst; by singing the choruses of religious songs and verses; by jumping, by spinning round like pegtops on their heels, by shaking their bodies from side to side, by flagellation.

As the sexual instincts were also excited by these spiritual orgies, the *radenias* of the *Chlists* generally wound up in a *svalny grek*, or promiscuous orgie, the lights being suddenly put out. It is an interesting fact that of all the dissenters the *Chlists* were the only ones who made converts

among the "educated" elements of Russian society—among officials, the military, and the landlords, of whom several appeared in the *Chlist* trials of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

The relations between the sexes present much irregularity among all the *Chlistic* sects. Some of them revive, by a sort of social Atavism, certain obsolete forms of family life, wherein the "headship" was accorded to women. Others admit polygamy and heterism; whilst others again protest vehemently against family life under any form, preaching absolute abstinence and the mutilation of the body as the only means whereby man can attain to physical purity. These latter are the *Skopzy* or *Castrati*, founded by Selivanov at the close of the eighteenth century.

It must not be supposed, however, that there was nothing about these *Chlists* save these promiscuous orgies on the one hand and the monstrosity of self-mutilation on the other. Time wrought its changes both in their religious views and in their practices. The *Skopzy*, who have been the most studied, and who are the wildest of all the *Chlistic* sects, offer an illustration of this gradual triumph of reason over the darkest

regions of superstition. Nowadays the number of regular *Skopzy* is small. Most of them view the doctrine of abstinence as directed against excess, and accept the view that regular matrimony is the best aid to moral perfection.

The fundamental doctrine of the *Chlists*—that of repeated Incarnation—offered ample latitude for the difference between gross idolatry and the simple belief in the personal presence. They, from the first, admitted their belief in a certain gradation of inspiration or incarnation, bestowed in varying degrees by the three Persons of the Trinity. God the Father, since the inspiration of the body of Danilo Filipovitch, the founder of the *Chlists*, has, they believe, only twice descended upon men, and both occasions were in times remote. God the Son has according to them appeared oftener, though still at long intervals. The Holy Ghost, on the contrary, very frequently descends on men : he permanently inspires the bodies of recognised prophets, and temporarily dwells in all the faithful during the hours of worship (*radenias*), when they are seized by religious frenzy.

The sobering influences of time, labour, and meditation have suppressed in some of their

number the grossest forms of worship, and have reduced religious intoxication to a milder state, in which they no longer trammel the regular functions of the mind. The *Chlistic* sects, which entirely rejected the shackles imposed by the rites, as well as those of the letter of the Scripture, were the only ones in which religious thought had no obstacle to its boldest flight. We should not for our part wonder if it was some day discovered that the *Dukhoborzy*, the most original and philosophical of our denominations, whose origin is unknown, had been cradled in some branch of the *Chlistic* Church.

We cannot, however, dwell at any length on the sects which fall under this category. They are interesting on their own account, but they have had no great historical influence. The people, as a whole, shunned them, and kept aloof from them. Let us, therefore, pass on to the bigger sections of old nonconformity.

The *Rascol* proper, the "Old Believers," who held stoutly to their ancient books and rites, split, at a very early stage, into two great sections.

- I. The *Popovzy*, or sacerdotal section, and—
- II. The *Bezpopovzy*, or priestless section,

The great point was, that when the split in the Church occurred, only one Bishop, Paul of Kolomna, sided with the *Rascol*. But he died soon after, without having ordained a successor. Now, according to the orthodox canons of Scripture, only a Bishop can lawfully confer ordination on a priest.

When, therefore, the *Rascolnik pops*, who had been ordained in bygone days, died out, in the ordinary course of nature, there was nobody to fill their places. In this perplexity some of the *Rascolniks* proposed to accept as rightful ministers the newly ordained orthodox (Niconian) *pops*, provided that they abjured Niconian fallacies and returned to the true faith (*i.e.*, old books and rites). They admitted that, by the peculiar grace of God, the sanctity of the priesthood was preserved in the Niconian church, its apostacy notwithstanding.

But the majority of the *Rascolniks* indignantly rejected such a compromise. They refused to recognise any value in the Niconian ordainment, whilst rejecting as worthless their Baptism, Eucharist, and all other ministrations. They accordingly remained without any *pops* at all. Thus did the two great branches of the ritualistic *Rascol* spring into existence,

The former, the *Popovzy*, number at the present day about three to four millions. In the course of time they divided into four denominations, which differ only in their mode of obtaining priests.

The original *Popovzy* or *Beglopopovzy*, which, in olden times, formed the great majority, but now are confined to a few scattered Communes, received the renegade orthodox priesthood. With them the ecclesiastical practice resolved itself into this :—

They kept a keen eye on all the orthodox *pops* within their ken, and when one of them was dismissed or likely to be dismissed by his Bishop for drunkenness or bad behaviour, or was eager to get a good living coupled with an easy life, some cunning emissary of the *Popovzy* was sent to him to try to win him over to the *Rascol*. A converted *pop*, before being allowed to officiate, was re-baptized by his new parishioners, as was also the practice with every Niconian, only the *pop* had in this case to jump into the water in full clerical vestments as a precaution, lest the sacrament of the Holy Orders should not be washed off in the operation.

Needless to say that the article thus procurable

by the *Rascolniks* was not the best of its kind, especially as time passed, and the clergy became sufficiently literate to understand the ridiculous narrowness of the *Rascol*.

But the *Popovzy* did not care about their priests' morality. They wanted them, and they paid them liberally for performing certain rites in which they believed,—a view which, in another form, is still shared by the bulk of their orthodox brethren.

In 1800, the Government, advised by the Metropolitan of Moscow, Platon, resolved to take a step which it ought to have taken at least one hundred years earlier. The stupid excommunication, launched by the Council of 1666 against those who adhered to the old books, was cancelled, the points of divergence declared irrelevant, and the Metropolitan of Moscow permitted to ordain men for the *Rascolnik* priesthood chosen by their own body and observing in the ceremony the old anti-Niconian rites, and authorizing them to use their old books. Had a similar course been adopted in time, there would have been no *Rascol* at all. Now it was too late. The *Rascol*, such as it was, had come to be "the creed of their forefathers." The *Popovzy* were suspicious lest these

concessions might conceal some design to allure, them into Niconianism altogether. The attempt at reconciliation practically collapsed. The total number of reunited *Popovzy* only amounted to a few hundreds of thousands, and there is little likelihood that they will ever noticeably increase : many have relapsed once more into the *Rascol*.

Their early suspicions were confirmed only too soon,—the *Edinoverzy* have been gradually deprived of the right of choosing their own ministers, a right by which they set great store. Now their *pops* are nominated or removed by the Bishop's chapter, without the parishioners having any voice in the matter. So utterly unable is our Church to tolerate even the appearance of any shadow of independence.

The bulk of the *Popovzy* tried to manage with their runaway priesthood as a makeshift, but as they were both scarce and expensive, a new and far more convenient, mode of supplying the religious wants of the community was gradually introduced. Old men—*starik*—well read in the Scriptures and of good morals, were appointed by the parishes as the *pops*' substitutes. They did not celebrate the mass, which is the privilege of those in Holy Orders, but they purchased from

the neighbouring *Popovzy* Church a supply of consecrated wafers and oil, and administered it when needful. They confessed, conducted funerals, and performed a sort of provisory marriage ceremony. People got accustomed to being ministered to by these elected *stariks*, who were, moreover, always at hand, took no fees, and expected no revenue from their office, which they accepted as an honour. Thus did the *starikovshina* grow into existence.*

In 1844 the *Popovzy*, by a stroke of good fortune, obtained what they had vainly sought since their first secession, a Bishop of their own. *Ambrosius* of Bosnia quarrelled with the Patriarch of Constantinople, and after much hesitation consented to exchange his precarious position for that of the head of the three millions of *Rascolniks*,—so at least he was promised by his tempters. He established his seat at *Belo-Kriniza* in Austria, as it would have been absurd for so precious a man to risk his life within the dominions of the Emperor Nicolas. The success of *Ambrosius* was very great indeed. He was acknowledged by most of the *Popovzy*, especially by those in big towns, and supplied them with as many *pops*, and *archpops*, and Bishops as they

required. A complete and independent ecclesiastical hierarchy was thus established for all the *Popovzy* who desired it, but their religious ardour had by this time cooled down so much, that a good many of them preferred to remain with their elected *stariks*, who were much less exacting and more accommodating. A fraction, the *Popovzy* of the Province of Tula, stuck with strange persistency to the traditional "runaway priesthood." The same feeling prevailed amongst their fellow-worshippers in Siberia.

As a whole, the *Popovzy* offers one of many illustrations of the remarkable associative capacity of the Russian *moujiks*. Their organization, embracing several millions of people, with a permanent administrative Council, a number of vast public benevolent institutions, and an exchequer containing upwards of ten millions of roubles (confiscated or simply robbed by the Emperor Nicolas I.), presents the most extensive example on record among similar popular organizations. For the rest, the *Popovzy* are the most backward and obtuse of all the members of our *Rascol*. Their opponents, the *Bezpopovzy*, or priestless, who form the larger section of the two, are also by far the more intellectually active. They number about

eight or nine millions of adherents, but these are divided into no end of sects and persuasions, which may be grouped into four distinct branches.

I. *Pomorzy*, or, the sea-shore sects, so named from the place, the northern sea coast, where they founded their first settlements ; thence, later on, disseminating their tenets all over the Empire. This is the oldest and most moderate branch of the "priestless," and at the same time the most intellectual, numbing among its leaders the best educated and most clear-headed men of the *Rascal*.

II. The *Fedoseevzy*, who separated from the main body of the *Pomorzy* in the beginning of the eighteenth century. They form another powerful branch of the "priestless," vying in social and political importance with the *Pomorzy*, though standing considerably behind them intellectually. They are younger and more extreme in their views than the *Pomorzy*, but have preserved more of the wooden formalism of the old *Rascal*.

III. The *Beguny* or Wanderers. This is the youngest branch of the "priestless," and by far the most extreme. Its numbers are small compared with the two former, but its influence is very considerable, as it has drawn within its

fold the boldest and most passionate elements of dissent.

IV. Finally come the *Filipovzy* (the middle of eighteenth century), which has much in common with the *Fedoseevzy*, though it is somewhat more extreme. The *Filipovzy* represent a tardy revival of the narrow fanaticism of the old *Rascol*. Their early followers went to the length of renewing, as an article of faith, the doctrine of "baptism by fire," or self-immolation. They cooled down after a time, but have not developed to the same extent, nor played so important a part in Russia, as the three above-named branches of the priestless *Rascol*.

Each of these sects, as well as each of their numberless sub-divisions, presents of course some point of difference in its doctrines. But these divergencies are quite irrelevant in themselves. True to the spirit of the *Rascol*, they refer to matters of exterior worship or symbolism. Thus, Theodosius of Fedosy, the founder of the great sect which bears his name, summed up his points of disagreement with the *Pomorzy* in nine theses, among which the following are to be found. "It is wrong and heretical to write the words 'Jesus Christ, the King of Glory,' over the

crucifix as the *Pomorzy* do. The crucifix should bear Pilate's inscription, 'Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.'" In another thesis he strove to establish the doctrine that at the Easter service, when exclaiming "Christ is risen," the faithful should raise their hands. A third thesis prohibited men from bowing to the earth during all fast days save those of Lent. Only one of the nine theses deals with a matter which sounds like something more essential: whilst insisting on celibacy and abstinence for all the faithful, Fedosy forbade any of his disciples to assume the position and the name of "monk."

The doctrinal divergences of the *Filipovsky* are of exactly the same stamp.

As to the *Beguny*, or Wanderers, they are not so advanced even as this implies, accepting without any noticeable modification the doctrine of the *Fedoseevy*.

The real difference between the various sects of the "priestless" *Rascolniks* refers to the emotional rather than to the doctrinal elements of their creed. They differ greatly in their mode of enunciating* a doctrine on which, theoretically, all the "priestless" sects are agreed; namely, that of the reign of Antichrist. All the "priest-

less" started with admitting the real and bodily existence of Antichrist, in the person of the Tzar Peter, and then in the persons of his successors. The doctrine was not rejected by any of their sect, but it was considerably modified in the course of time.

The *Pomorzy* broadened and "spiritualised" this idea, until so little of the essence of Antichrist attached to the men in authority that it might be disregarded—so small indeed was it that it could not even stand in the way of public prayers being offered for their head, the Tzar. They modified, it is true, the orthodox formula of the prayer, rejecting the laudatory epithets referring to religion. The compromise still proved to be unpalatable to a good many *Rascolniks*.

Fedtsy, and afterwards Filip, gave expression to these grovelling sentiments. This was at the bottom of their split, and also of their success. Both these sects vehemently denounced this practice of the *Pomorzy* as an abomination, reinstating the doctrine of the bodily presence of Antichrist in all its strength.

Both the *Fedoseevzy* and *Filipovzy* were cruelly persecuted by the government, whom they obsti-

- nately vilified as the ministers of Antichrist. The *Fedoseevzy* admitted no prayers for the Tzar, even after, thanks to underhand influence, they had obtained a good deal of toleration, and had established their head-quarters at Moscow, where they owned a vast almshouse, large enough to hold several thousand inmates, a school, a board of administration, and a treasury, which all appeared in the police reports under the heading "burial ground."

- When the Emperor Paul I. ascended the throne, most exaggerated rumours concerning his rashness and unruly temper were rife among such Russians as took any interest in politics. It was reported that he was particularly ill-disposed towards the *Rascolniks*, and wished to put them down at any price. The then spiritual leader of the Moscow *Fedoseevzy*, a certain Kovylin, a merchant of great wealth and not unexceptional morality, was seized with such a panic that he at once ordered that prayers for the Emperor should be introduced into the Liturgy, and even went so far as to add to the Emperor's name the epithet of "truly believing," which was a sort of covert denial of the *Rascol* and recognition of the dominant creed.

After the Emperor Paul I. had been killed, and the tolerant Alexander I. filled his place, Kovylin wanted to drop the prayers for the Emperor from the Liturgy and to return to the old practice, but the cooling process was by that time so far advanced that he met with strong opposition. An influential *Rascolnik* preacher, Jacob Kholin, began to agitate among the Moscow *Fedoseevzy* in favour of "rendering unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." For this purpose he visited the affiliated colonies of his sect in Yaroslav, Starodub, Riga, and St. Petersburg, and easily prevailed in inducing a considerable number of the *Fedoseevzy* parishes of their own free will to sanction that which Kovylin had done in a moment of panic.

Here once more the old legacy of hatred was revived, probably for the last time, and certainly in the most furious and uncompromising form. In 1811 the authorities discovered in the Province of Tambov the existence of a new sect called *Stranniky*, or *Beguny* (Wanderers), who were at once declared to be "very dangerous," and accordingly knouted and transported to the Siberian mines. The *Stranniky* were an offshoot of the *Fedoseevzy*, their founder having been one of them, a certain Ephimius or Efim, the deserter.

For a long time these people had their headquarters in *Sopelki*, a village in the province of Yaroslav. The distinct characteristics of their sect consisted in the full development of the doctrine of the reign of Antichrist.

The "wanderers" made this article of faith the keynote of their teaching. The Tzar is in their opinion the Prophet of the Beast; the officials are his ministers; the two-headed Imperial eagle is the seal of Antichrist, the sign of the dragon. Everyone who offers any kind of homage to the agents of Antichrist, or who pays taxes for their unholy purposes, or allows himself to be numbered and registered, or accepts a passport or any other document sealed with the Imperial emblem, excludes himself from the book of the living, and is doomed to perdition, as Antichrist's servant and abettor.

They look upon their co-religionists, who came to terms with the Beast, with the same disgust and abhorrence as they lavish on the Nikonians.

In describing "the renewing of Antichrist," as the "wanderers" call the Emperor's coronation, their founder Efim indulges in the following details. "Then there come to worship him, *i.e.*, to offer him the oath of allegiance, those fierce

fiends the Bishops, then the mock-pops (Satan's horses, who transport souls to hell, to their father the evil one); next follow the various foul apostatic sects—the Niconians first, then the Old Believers (*Popovzy*), the accused Armenians, and the *Pomorzy*, who are hateful to God."

The faithful are warned to resist anything emanating from the Tzar, and, as they cannot do this successfully, that their only safety lies in flight. The most zealous of these sectarians carry out this principle to the letter. They spend their lives in wandering from place to place. They never remain for long together in the same locality, always living concealed in the houses of their hosts without the knowledge of the authorities. They pay no taxes, apply for no passports, give no bribes, and avoid all contact with the agents of Antichrist. Those who have not the courage or the worldly means wherewith to lead such an existence continue to live in the world, concealing those who have attained to a higher grade of perfection and purity than themselves. The houses of the settled adherents of the sect are always built after a peculiar plan, and ingeniously provided with hiding-places, undiscoverable by the uninitiated, wherein they lodge

their guests. Each member of the sect, however, with but a few exceptions, towards the close of his life betakes himself to actual wandering, or secludes himself in some way from the world polluted by the presence of Antichrist, in order that he may have his soul cleansed through repentance before he lies on his death-bed.

With the authorities the regular "wanderers" are even at the present time at daggers drawn. They are persecuted as "particularly dangerous," even when there is no offence to be laid to their charge. On their part, too, the "wanderers" make no concessions to the civil authorities, and are bitterly offended against such of their co-religionists who offer up prayers for their enemy the Tzar.

"They (the other *Rascolniks*) meet in their churches and begin to offer prayers to God for him, the apostate—Antichrist! They sing and they read: 'God, preserve our reigning Tzar, and give him victory over those who stand up against him.' . . . But think, O you blasphemer, for which victory are you praying! . . . The victory against those who in obedience to the Holy Word hide themselves in mountains and forests and in the caverns of the earth to avoid

his face, and who will not swear allegiance to him, nor give their children up to him, nor pay him taxes, nor allow him to number their souls. What you are praying for is, that he should overcome them and make them his prisoners. O you servants of Antichrist, upholders of the devil, defenders of the seven-headed serpent ! ”

Yet notwithstanding all the intensity of feeling and singleness of mind displayed by this interesting sect, it has not been able to avoid undergoing the same transformation which the Old Believers, the *Pomorzy* and the *Fedoseevzy*, had experienced before them. Of the three chief ramifications of this sect, two, namely the *Poshekhon* Wanderers and the *Pless* Wanderers (so called after the name of their respective head-quarters), still adhere to the above described doctrine ; whilst the third, the *Sopelky* Wanderers, have changed their views. According to them, Antichrist reigns spiritually. By this is signified all deviation from the true faith. All heretics are in this sense Antichrists, and Antichrist was embodied in Tzar Peter more completely than in all others only because he held greater power in his hands. They preach the virtue of disobedience only to such orders of the government as are unchristian.

They also decline to take passports, and continue to lead a wandering life, but only because in the official passports delivered to sectarians they are designated as *Rascolniks*, and not, as "orthodox Christians," as they believe themselves to be. As to the "two-headed eagle" which embellishes the passports, this no longer scares them.

Two other ramifications of the same sect have gone still further, and have stepped out of *Rascol* ritualism altogether. But of them hereafter.

Thus, excluding some branches of the "wanderers," and a few denominations belonging to intermediate sects, the whole of the ritualistic *Rascol* has cooled down as far as political opposition goes. They have put up with the Tzar's habit of crossing himself with three fingers, smoking tobacco, and wearing a German overcoat. Even those among the *Fedoseevzy* and *Filipovzy* who do not pray for him are not the same class of men as those who fled into the wilderness in the first transports of a newly-revealed creed. The *Rascol* has become a commonplace religion. Its members received it as an inheritance—they did not win it at the cost of inner struggles, doubts, and pains. They can be earnest in religious

matters, but nothing more. The warmer manifestations of the religious feelings are the birth-right of new sects fresh from the toils of creation. It is worth noticing that most of the founders of new sects and authors of discord are themselves proselytes, newly converted to the *Rascol* from the orthodox Church.

It is in the nature of all emotions to subside after a time, if the provocation ceases to be an active one. The *Rascolniks* are far from enjoying complete tolerance even now. The petty jealousy of the dominant Church still imposes on them humiliating restrictions, lest they should think themselves the equals of the orthodox. Thus, whilst foreign Christians and all the non-Christian creeds, Mohammedans, Jews, and idolaters, are permitted to freely worship after their own manner, the *Rascolniks* are expressly prohibited from giving any outward public sign of their worship. They may not give to their houses of prayer the exterior appearance of churches; they are forbidden to form processions; they may not announce their hours of prayer by the ringing of bells.

The position of the *Rascolniks* in the Russia of to-day is very much the same as that of the

Christians in ancient times in Turkish and Saracen countries, where they were tolerated with the same vexatious restrictions. Of course, all this must be very irritating to the *Rascolniks*.

And this is not the worst—they have more serious grounds for discontent. The ancient laws of Nicolas I., which make “conversion of others” amenable to the criminal code, are not yet abrogated. Every “non-registered” *Rascolnik*, which is tantamount to saying nine-tenths of them, is liable to prosecution in virtue of this law,—if only the police or the administration choose to take the trouble.

The common *Rascolniks* are rarely molested. But the cowardly uncertainty of the law makes it a terrible weapon against any prominent dissenters whom somebody in power may have the stupidity to fear or the wickedness to hate.

It will suffice us to mention the fate of three *Popovzy* Bishops, Cannon, Arcady, and Hennady, who were kept in the prison of Suzdal monastery from 1856 till 1881, twenty-five years! (the whole of the reign of Alexander II.), for no other offence than that they declined to renounce their ecclesiastical grade as the price of their liberty, in compliance with a mean request of the orthodox

consistory ; or the case of the unfortunate Adrian Pushkin, a merchant of Perm, who was possessed with the craze that he himself was a new incarnation of Jesus Christ, and sent a paper and a synoptical picture to the Holy Synod to establish his claims. For this offence the unhappy man was kept in strictest solitary confinement for fifteen years, and was released when a broken old man, only to die a few months afterwards.

These petty vexations and occasional acts of tyranny must of course keep alive amongst the *Rascolniks*, a certain amount of irritation of a political nature. There is, however, little probability that the Government should so extend the persecutions—of Ritualistic dissent at all events—as to foolishly provoke a fresh outburst of what is called religious fanaticism.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL the emotional force developed in the *Rascol* did not disappear without leaving any trace behind, by the mere fact of its exposure, to the cooling influences of life and time ; neither was it wasted in acts of self-immolation. A fraction of that living power was spent on the useful work of the inner regeneration of the social body which gave it birth. In stirring up thought, and inducing a number of people to exercise their sleeping intellectual faculties, the *Rascol* produced certain intellectual habits, which remained as a permanent gain after religious excitement had subsided.

The *Rascol* was set up in the name of absolute conservatism, and for the unconditional denial of the right of the human mind to criticise or investigate. The Niconians, on the other hand, appeared as the champions of progress, as compared with the obtuse *Rascolniks*. But the opponents soon changed their weapons. A *Rascolnik* wanted to

think and to discover the truth for himself. He stuck to his ancient creed because he cared for it so much, and believed himself to be in the right, not because he was ordered by the superior to believe such and such a thing. His creed was of his own choice, the highest interest of his life, not the "business of the Patriarch," as was the case with his orthodox brethren. The knowledge of the Scriptures and of the history of the Church was essential to him, to remove his own doubts, to defend his creed against his opponents, and to spread it, if possible, among his enemies: it was a defensive and offensive weapon. Thus, whilst the orthodox peasants, with their well-revised and well-spelt books, remained utterly ignorant and careless about the religion into which they were born, the *Rascolniks*, from the first, spared no efforts to gain some rudiment of scriptural knowledge.

When they were allowed to found permanent settlements and to live peacefully on their patches of ground somewhere on the shores of the icy ocean, one of the chief cares of the *Rascolniks* was to provide for the regular education of the community. The first, and in many respects the most important, of these early settle-

men's was the so-called *Wygorezie*, a series of villages on the River Wyg, which had for their centre the Wyg monastery. This association took the lead in the inner history of the *Rascol*, and may serve as a fair model of many similar institutions founded in various times by all the big sects of the "priestless" as well as the "priestly" *Rascol*.

The Wyg settlement was founded, in 1696, by a small body of "priestless" dissenters, under the leadership of two brothers, Ignaty and Andrey (Andreas) Denisov.

The elder, Ignaty, did not stop long with the Wyg people. He was a remnant of other and more fanatical days, which were drawing to a close. The author of the first "locking up" of the *Paleostrovsky* monastery, he perished in the flames "for the glory of the faith," with about fifteen hundred others—his followers. Andrey Denisov lived to an advanced age, working with head and hands to build up the Wyg community, and to consolidate the *Rascol* Church, then scattered all over the Empire. This remarkable man was a good representative of a long series of *Rascolnik* leaders, who united the exaltation peculiar to apostles of new creeds with the talents

and shrewdness of men of business. As a writer and preacher he took an active part in the then pending controversy between the *priestly* and *priestless Rascol*, and was instrumental in giving definite shape and the decided victory to the *priestless* faction over their opponents. At the same time, by his example and eloquence he kept the Wyg people together, sustaining them amidst hardships which were trying even to Russian *moujiks*.

The colony was so badly provided with the means of subsistence that for several winters, which followed bad harvests, they had to feed on what they called "straw bread." The straw was pulverized on a mill and diluted flour added to it, in so small a quantity that when baked the loaves could not hold together; the dough crumbled up on the bottom of the oven, and had to be swept out with a broom and eaten with spoons. Yet even this meagre diet was so scarce that it was only partaken of once a day. Even in the better years, agriculture in these high latitudes hardly supplied the colony with their daily bread.

One generation saw the whole economical condition of the Wyg people improved past all recognition, thanks to their spirit of co-operation.

and to the remarkable business talents of their abbot, Andrey Denisov. He was the first to conceive and to apply the idea that the mutual confidence and trust existing between the members of his sect, scattered all over the country, might be made the base of extensive business relations. The *Rascolniks* of the Volga, of the Don, and of Moscow readily trusted the abbot of Wygorezie with their capital, and with unlimited credit, whilst on their side the Wyg people could place equal confidence in the representatives of the local congregations with regard to their commercial affairs. Without giving up agriculture altogether, the Wyg settlers nevertheless devoted most of their spare time to the manufacturing industries. They produced leathern wares, clothes, iron wares, and agricultural implements. Their most extensive and lucrative trade was in brass-casting. They discovered copper mines in the Province of Olonezk, where they extracted the metal and worked it to great advantage. They supplied, moreover, the whole *Rascolnik* world with *ikons*, crosses, and other sacred utensils, made strictly after the pattern of ancient orthodox samples.

The production of these articles was carried on on the ordinary Russian co-operative principle,

enriching both the monastery and the individual workers, who had their share in the profits. The capital thus realized was not left lying idle. It was chiefly invested in the corn trade, the most profitable in Russia up to the present time. The Wyg monastery had at its disposal vast sums of money of its own, and also money deposited with it by the *Rascolnik* communities of other towns. The traders of the monastery purchased corn in the southern Provinces and transported it by their own craft to the northern markets, and became after a time the chief purveyors to the new Capital. During Denisov's lifetime the Wyg monastery grew to be the wealthiest joint-stock company in the Empire.

The death of Andrey Denisov changed nothing in the position of the Wyg community or its policy. The popular principle of communal self-government formed the base of all *Rascolnik* organizations. The abbot ruled in the monastery with the assistance of a body of directors; all were elected, and transacted the business of the community "in common," consulting it on all important occasions. The Wyg monastery ruled in the same spirit over the whole *suzemok*, or "land-union," as the little territory occupied by the

Rascolnik settlers was called. There was little formality in this kind of administration, but still the control of all the business was in the hands of the community. Change of persons mattered little. This arrangement, reproduced in all *Rascolnik* organisations, accounts for their solidity and the good management of their public affairs.

Regular educational institutions were started in the Wyg monastery as soon as the community could make both ends meet. The monastery had two regular schools, one for adults, another capable of holding several hundred children, both male and female, who were brought by their parents to the monastery from distant towns and Provinces. There were also a special body of scribes, who copied books; a collection of old *ikons*, which served as models for their *ikon* painters, and a good library, furnished with ancient books and manuscripts for the use of the studious. Many of the future leaders and teachers of the *Rascol*, both male and female, received their education in the Wyg monastery.

The participation by the women in the studies and activities usually confined to men is one of the most sympathetic peculiarities of the whole *Rascol*. The women, so completely subjugated and

so often ill-treated amongst the Great Russian peasantry of the orthodox creed, recovered their dignity in the *Rascol*. The sects were the only bodies among the peasantry where intellectual gifts were valued highly, and formed the chief claim to respect and influence. Religion was to them the supreme interest, and such members of the community as showed the greatest spiritual gifts were naturally the most appreciated. Wealth and physical strength bowed reverentially before intelligence, eloquence, and devotion to the common creed. In the religious bodies the women took their place by the side of the men, as their birthright. They showed the same zeal for their faith and the same courage on the scaffold and in the torture chambers. They studied the Scriptures and preached the Gospel as well as the men. Sometimes they founded new sects. The names of Akuline Ivanovna, Marianna, Hania, and other women were much renowned among the *Rascolniks* of various persuasions. Very often the posts of "readers, or unordained presbyters in various *Rascolnik* parishes, were filled by women. In one sect, the *Ochishenzy* (the Purified), every family had its own priestess. One of the girls—the one

who seemed the most gifted—was from her childhood exempted from all household work, and devoted all her time to study and to the reading of the Scriptures. When she came of age, she was made the family chaplain, confessor, and general spiritual adviser. No important business was decided upon without her approbation.

In all sects alike the women take the leading part in the work of education. A special class of women, who renounced marriage, the *Belizy* (White Ones), devoted themselves to the education of the *Rascolnik* children as a profession. Sometimes they wandered from village to village, sometimes they resided permanently in cloisters specially intended for females, to which girls were sent as to boarding-schools.

All the sects of the *Rascol*, the "priestly" as well as the "priestless," the *Pomorzy* as well as the *Fedoseevzy*, spared no pains in order to supply their co-religionists with the means of education.

Thus the *Rascolniks* had their regular popular schools a hundred years before the first official schools, for the benefit of the State peasants, were founded *on paper*, because until 1861 there were practically no popular schools for the orthodox peasantry to attend. Men who knew how to read

and write were in those times a great rarity among the orthodox *moujiks*, whilst among the *Rascolniks* education was common among men and with many women.

The *Rascolnik* schools, supported and managed by the people themselves, without any thievish *tchinovnik* to pocket the funds intended for them, worked tolerably well. The instruction the *Rascolniks* received there was not extensive, and had an exclusively religious tendency, but it satisfied the wants of the people for the time being.

The splits which very soon occurred in the *Rascol* only increased this desire for instruction, as each sect had to defend its own position.

The *Rascolniks* were exceedingly fond of religious discussions, and were constantly arranging controversial conferences. Sometimes they debated with the orthodox, but this was neither safe nor particularly interesting. They preferred the debates arranged between representatives of various branches of the *Rascol*. Famous preachers and debaters met, coming from the farthest extremities of the Empire to take part in, or to be present at, these tournaments, which made a stir all over the *Rascolnik* world.

The subjects of discussion were either general, the whole doctrine of the respective denominations, or special. Sometimes questions of mere detail furnished the *Rascolnik* schoolmen with matter for discussion which lasted over several days. The thing was taken in great earnest. When three famous disputants of the *Pomorzy* sect came to Staraia Russa, to hold a disputation with Eusign Fedoseevitch (son of Fedosy, the founder of the sect), about "Pilate's Inscription," the latter imposed a fast of several days' duration on all his household, that he might obtain from God the needful inspiration for the contest.

As a rule these disputations resulted only in the greater embitterment of the animosity between the sects, as none went to these meetings in a spirit of conciliation; but it did not prevent the parties from meeting on the field again and again.

After the debates, the chief disputants were wont to set down their views in writing in pamphlets and treatises, which were copied and widely circulated. The price of these manuscript volumes and pamphlets was very moderate, and within reach of an average purchaser, owing to the great competition between the numerous copyists. Thus a vast clandestine literature was

gradually created, which, notwithstanding the narrow field of its speculations, sometimes exhibits remarkable subtlety and acuteness of mind. Mr. MacKenzie Wallace, who had an opportunity of perusing some of these pamphlets written by these self-taught *moujiks*, says that they were not inferior to the dissertations of the trained Schoolmen of the Middle Ages.

Such an amount of intellectual life must have appeared exuberant when compared with the dead stagnation in which the orthodox peasantry lived.

“Orthodox peasants,” says Ivan Axacoff, “endowed with spiritual gifts and anxious to exercise them in some intellectual pursuit, indifferent to orthodoxy and suspicious of the clergy and the government, generally went over to the *Rascol*, where they found the society of men who were in a certain sense highly cultured, libraries, readers, publishers, copyists, and every aid to a free interchange of thought and opinion.”

Thus did the *Rascol* become the embodiment of a kind of *moujik* culture entirely different to, and perfectly independent of, that of the upper, or Europeanized Russians. The *Rascolniks* knew no foreign language, and for a long time shunned

even Russian literature, because they considered the secular alphabet introduced by Peter the Great to be heretical. They only taught their children the Slavonic alphabet in which the Scriptures were printed. They lived, isolated by their religious prejudice, as completely apart from the world outside as if they were surrounded by impassable deserts. Still, they formed among themselves a nation of more than ten millions of men, in active intellectual interchange of thought. They could not relapse into utter stagnation.

Rascolnik culture offers indeed unmistakable signs of progress in its particular domain. With the small intellectual capital they possessed, the actual progress was necessarily a very modest one, being confined to religious matters. Still, it is even now not devoid of interest, because so perfectly independent of any exterior influence, and entirely evolved from its own scanty materials.

The Bible (the ancient unrevised edition, of course), with a few ecclesiastical books, some old translations from the Greek, formed the only intellectual food of the *Rascòl* up to recent times.

The first steps of the *Rascòl* were exceedingly slow. For seventy years it floundered in the slough of ritualism from which it had started,

The *Fedoseevy* doctrine mentioned in a former chapter is an illustration of this. People caused discord and quarrelled, and excommunicated one another, for differences in the mere detail of exterior worship. One denomination, for instance, seceded upon the question of the folding brass *ikons*, which they considered heretical, only admitting as correct those that were solid, and formed from one piece of metal or wood.

From the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, questions of broader interest have been mixed up with those of ancient ritualism. The "priestless" take the lead in this movement, bringing the burning question of marriage, the stumbling-block of the sect, to the front.

The "priestless"—those who refused to accept the runaway orthodox *pops* as ministers—had a hard course to pursue. Strict observers of all the traditions and canons of the orthodox Church, they could perform for themselves only such rites as simple laymen are allowed to celebrate, *i.e.*, baptise, hear confessions, and read certain parts of the mass. They could hold no communion service, and what was in practice more difficult to avoid—no marriage ceremony. According to the canons of the orthodox Church

only ordained clergymen can perform this ceremony. No clergy meant no wedlock. Monastic celibacy was imposed on all the adherents of the "priestless" *Rascol* as the only state free from sin and fitting a Christian.

The leaders of the "priestless" *Rascol* tried hard to enforce this prescription both by preaching and by example. All their settlements were originally intended to be monasteries. The numbers of the faithful, however, of both sexes made the realisation of this intention exceedingly difficult. At the Wyg settlement—that beacon of the True Faith—the men and women were rigorously kept apart. They were lodged in two different groups of houses, and they never met in common rooms. In the chapel during the service each sex stood in a place specially assigned to it, and separated from the other by a double curtain of mats. Even the whole length of the passage which led from the women's lodgings to the door of the chapel was lined with mats, so as to render the fair sex invisible to the other. Private interviews were strictly prohibited. Relatives and fellow-villagers were allowed to meet in a common hall under the eyes of six elderly sisters of no less than sixty years of age, carefully

chosen for this office by the Elder or Abbot of the *Wygorezie*.

Needless to say that all these precautions proved of no avail against nature. The number of transgressors was so great that it was impossible to deal harshly with them. They were excommunicated for a period, and had some penance imposed on them, after which they were readmitted into the Church, and as a rule after an interval had to undergo the same punishment a second time, by way of expiation and purification.

When the once small colony had increased to many thousands of souls, mostly husbandmen, whose scattered farms covered vast tracts of land won by their labour from marshes and brushwood, the separation of the sexes became quite impracticable. A *moujik* cannot cultivate his land without the constant assistance of his *baba*, to perform all the household work, to cook his dinner, and mind the cattle. The inhabitants of Pomorie—as the whole of the *Rascolnik* territory was called—naturally fell into two different classes—the monks, who inhabited the centres of the settlement, such as the Wyg monastery, and formed some other minor religious societies and Chapels; and the laymen, who lived scattered in

small villages all around in regular peasant households with their unwedded wives. They could condone the contraction of these unauthorised unions by the performance of a penance, which varied in severity according to the austerity or mildness of the elected readers or informal presbyters of their respective congregations.

These anomalous conditions could not fail to give twinges of conscience to the *Rascolniks*, but from the point of view of strict ritualism they had no choice ; what they considered a transgression against morality was a venial sin when compared with a breach of the sacred ordinances of the Church.

About the middle of the eighteenth century the question of marriage began to be treated from another point of view. In 1750 a very popular writer of the *Pomorzy* sect, Anikin, boldly approached the essential question of wedlock, maintaining that marriage is a sacred institution before God, independently of the Priest's benediction and the Church ceremony.

His treatise made a great sensation, and excited a good deal of discussion. Among his followers was Basili Emelianov, the elder of the Moscow *Pomorzy*, who began to perform a sort of

marriage ceremony in his Chapel. This produced a scandal among his fellow-worshippers. The Abbot of the Wyg monastery, Archip Dementiev, the head of the whole *Pomorzy* sect, was strongly opposed to this innovation. A council was summoned, Emelianov was excommunicated, and, being a rather weak man, submitted and made a hypocritical recantation. His case was, however, taken up by several popular writers and debaters of the sect, such as Krilov, Paul the Curious, Skachkov, and others. They advanced the thesis—very sweeping for the *Rascol*—that in the absence of a clergyman, laymen can, by appointment of the Church, perform certain rites proper to the ordained clergy. The *Pomorzy* Church became divided within itself. The Abbot of Wygorezie, Archip Dementiev, Grigory Ivanovitch, author of more than twenty works on various subjects, and Dolgy, a merchant, wrote and preached vehemently against those who married.

The times were, however, ripe for a change, and the advocates of marriage gradually gained ground. Several of the former opponents of marriage passed over to the opposite side. In 1795 Archip Dementiev, the Abbot, made the

declaration, that, "fearing God he does not consider Emelianov a heretic, nor the couples united by him, adulterers."

After Emelianov's death his successor, Hapriel Skachkov, went to Wygorezie, whence he returned in 1798 to Moscow, with a declaration, signed by the united *Pomorzy* sects, to the effect that "marriage does not consist in the Church ceremony, which may or may not be performed, but in the eternal vows of the married couple." This was an important victory, and a marked proof of the broadening out of the *Rascolnik* mind. Religion had ceased for them to be a mere rite—it had become a principle of conduct.

When the *Pomorzy* tried to bring the other great sect, the *Fedoseevzy*, over to their views, they met, however, with fierce opposition. Kovylin brutally pushed the ancient principle (of the rite above all things) to its logical conclusion, as follows:—

"Better to live as a Turk than to marry; better to have ten illegitimate children than one wedded husband." His followers made a picture, in which a wedded couple was represented, and the devil with a poker putting the soul into the body of the baby.

The example, nevertheless, spread among the *Fedoseevzy* too. The St. Petersburg elder of the sect began to unite some of his parishioners in matrimony. He was excommunicated. The St. Petersburg *Fedoseevzy* split off into two parties, and instituted a new persuasion, that of the *Speshnevo*.

In 1876 the Government gave countenance to this movement by recognising the legality, in the eyes of the law, of the marriages registered in *Rascolnik* Chapels.

Having thus settled according to the light of their individual reason and conscience one important question, that of matrimony, the "priestless" practically stepped out of the bonds of the *Rascol*. In thus admitting the Protestant principle of freedom of interpretation, in one question, they opened the way to its further conquests.

This nineteenth century, especially the last twenty-five years, has been a period of very rapid progress towards rationalism in religion among former *Rascolniks*.

Ten years before the Emancipation, a teacher belonging to the Wanderers, Nicolas Kiseleff, wrote against the spirit of obtuse conservatism which characterised the *Rascol*, advocating the

very "opposite ideas of progress in religion. "You call yourselves 'Old Believers' and 'worshippers of old rites,' and you are proud of these names, though they are against the very spirit of Christianity. The Christian creed has nothing old in it, but ever grows younger and fresher, and for the believers in Christ there can be no other name than Christians."

These new ideas produced a great stir in the *Rascolnik* world, and Kiseleff found many sympathisers and adherents.

Another writer, a learned *Rascolnik* monk, Paul, in his book, *The King's Way*, which had a very great sale, rejected the authority of some of the canonised Fathers of the Church. In another work of his he attacks the principle of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, proving on historical grounds that before Nikon's time, and up to 1685, there were in the Pskov Bishopric one hundred and sixty parishes in the hands of the peasants, who appointed presbyters without their having been ordained by the Bishop.

Many prominent *Rascolnik* teachers attacked various other important dogmas of the orthodox Church. One man, Efim Blokhin, who wrote in 1840, rejected all the Sacraments; others

accepted Baptism but rejected the Eucharist, on the authority of St. John and St. Augustine, who said, "Believe, and thou hast eaten and hast partaken of the Eucharist." Very many reject three or four of the less important sacraments peculiar to the Greek Church.

The leading spirits of the *Rascol* have long since relinquished the petty ritualistic hobbies of their forefathers. The questions as to crossing with two or with three fingers, or of the Greek *versus* the Latin form of the cross, are replaced by questions as to the binding force of the letter of Scripture, the amount of freedom of interpretation permissible, the authenticity of certain prophecies in the Old Testament, the reality of the miracles in the New.

A vast intellectual work of transformation is evidently in progress within the old *Rascol*, of which the writings just mentioned are a symptom and an instrument. A noticeable change has been wrought during the last two generations in the spirit of our ritualistic dissent. The respective positions of the orthodox and the *Rascolniks* has been completely reversed. Fifty years ago the Orthodox reproached the *Rascolniks* with their narrowness, and their slavish adherence to the

letter, to the neglect of the spirit of religious doctrines. Now the *Rascolniks* levy the same reproaches against the Orthodox, whom they call "Ritualists of the Church Hierarchy." To use the pertinent expression of I. Aksakoff, the *Rascolniks* think that "the so-called Orthodox creed is a perfunctory, official one, which does not spring from the living faith of those who profess it, and which serves merely as one of the instruments used by the Government for the maintenance of order."

With the *Rascolniks*, the tendency to disregard exterior formalities and to seek after the "inner sense" of the Scriptures constantly gains ground. The Scriptures must be understood according to the spirit, and not according to the letter. This transformation has already spread very far among the "priestless." Their main body can be said to have given up the *Rascol* as a ritual altogether. The *Popovzy* are much slower to move, and stick tenaciously to the antiquated creed of their forefathers.

There exist a number of sects, founded during the last twenty or thirty years, in which the most advanced rationalistic theories of the *Rascol* are embodied. Such are the *Nemoliaki* (Non-prayers),

founded in 1835-7 by Zimin, a Cossack of the *Dop*, and now widely spread among the *Rascolniks* in Siberia, Perm, Moscow, Odessa, and Nijni Noïgorod; the *Vozdykhanzy* (the Sighers), who appeared about twelve years ago in the Province of Kaluga, and afterwards spread into the neighbouring provinces; the *Kalikovzy* of the Province of Tchernigov; the several new ramifications of the Yaroslav *Beguny*, and many others. These sects are the only ones which have latterly had any considerable success within the *Rascol*. All are more or less rationalistic; they reject the Sacraments (sometimes all of them, but occasionally making exceptions in favour of Baptism and the Eucharist), the Church Hierarchy, the *ikons*, and the saints, also the worship of relics, and temple-worship. All bear traces, however, of their *Rascolnik* origin, for they always contain something about Nikon as Antichrist either in the fantastic views set forth as to the history of the world, or in some other peculiar tenets.

All these are pregnant signs. Vast communities, composed of from twelve to fifteen millions of men, everywhere present the widest intellectual differences. Whilst the more advanced elements of the *Rascol* have ceased to be *Rascolniks* at all,

among the most backward we hear now and again of isolated cases of self-immolation. But the painstaking investigators of the modern *Rascol* have brought to light sufficient proof of the vastness and intensity of religious rationalism in the leading body of the *Rascol* to show unmistakably in what direction it is moving.

The Orthodox Church has been quite right in asserting that the *Rascol* cannot stand the progress of time and culture. The great ritualistic schism is mightily shaken, and as such its years are numbered. But the Church was wrong to suppose that when their eyes should be opened to the narrowness of their doctrine the people would return to the bosom of the Mother-Church. What we may expect, with a good deal of certainty, is that they will reverse their tactics and attack it from the opposite side.

Before passing on to the consideration of purely rationalistic dissent, unmixed and unconnected with the *Rascol* proper, we must say a few words about one strange sect of which we have heard pretty often of late. It is the so-called sect of the *Ne Nashy*, or the "Negators." It is not exactly a "sect," as they are avowed freethinkers, denying

everything in religion. Nevertheless they exhibit a fierce fanaticism in their negation, and to this we are unaccustomed in connection with the sobering influences of scientific thought. These popular freethinkers have been met and observed by educated people in several prisons. H. Lopatin described in the Vperiod several of those detained in the Irkutsk prison. Mishla, an official in the civil service, had an opportunity of studying them in one of the prisons of Western Siberia. W. Korolenko, our talented young writer, when on his way to Siberia met one of them in Perm prison. They are said to be very numerous in the Province of Saratov.

All accounts agree in representing these people as unflinching, fierce rebels, denying all authority, whether Divine or human, bearing, and often provoking, the most appalling punishments, rather than show any sign of submission, or deference to their gaolers or any other men in authority.

It would be an honour to us to call them popular Nihilists, were they not imbued at the same time with a sort of worship of individual selfishness, and with gloomy pessimist views as regards all things human. It is difficult to comprehend what good purpose is served by all the

frightful sufferings they bring down on their own heads by wilful, sometimes wanton, insults and roughness. It seems as though they enjoyed suffering on some incomprehensible psychological grounds of their own. Mishla describes a mild type of these popular freethinkers, a certain Nicolas Tchukhmishov, who did not refuse to work in the prison, who answered all questions as to his name and origin when asked by the prison authorities, and who did not worry them much in any other fashion, as his companions were wont to do. He was accordingly treated with mildness by the gaolers, who were glad to overlook as "crotchets" his habit of wearing his hat in their presence, and using rather free language towards his superiors, etc. But suddenly, when the new Governor of the Province, who is as absolute a monarch in Siberia as a Turkish Pacha, came to visit the prison, Nicolas Tchukhmishov publicly abused him in most opprobrious terms, though quite unprovoked. He was instantly condemned to be flogged. The next day, when the sentence had to be carried out, he assaulted the *ispravnik* and overthrew the *zerzalo*, a sort of fetish intended to represent the Emperor, for which offences the infuriated *ispravnik* had him flogged almost to

death. When Mishla, with whom he was on friendly terms, paid him a visit at the hospital, and asked him for what reason he had done all this, Tchukhmishov quietly answered, "I had to do it, it was necessary," and offered no further explanation.

There is something which recalls the early self-immolators of the *Rascolnik* in these strange yearnings after martyrdom. A. Prugavin names, as the founder of this "sect," a certain Vasily Shyshkov, a peasant from the Province of Saratov, sentenced to exile in Siberia for his religious opinions. He was by birth a member of the *Fedoseevy*, but not being satisfied with it he changed. Four times he altered his creed, and in the meantime was thrice rebaptized. None of the Churches satisfied him, so he began to study the Scriptures for himself, with the hope of finding his own way to God. Instead of finding peace, however, he was struck by the contradictions contained in the Scriptures, and after great inward struggle and anguish he ended by abjuring the Scriptures, Religion, God, and the future life. To the question "How was the world created?" he answered, that "it had never been created at all, but had existed from all time." As to the immor-

talitý of the soul, he taught that the mind and the body of man are perpetuated in his children, all else perishes absolutely.

This negative sect appears under two other names—the *Netóvzy*, or “Deniers,” and probably also the *Molchalniky*, or the “Dumb”—the same whom a Governor of Western Siberia has again and again put to regular torture for the fun of verifying whether it would be possible for them not to utter a sound during the frightful ordeal.

It is not necessary to relegate all these negative sects to one common source. Most probably they sprang up sporadically here and there ; but from its general character it is easy to infer that this form of free thought grew on the religious hotbed of the *Rascol*, independently of the influence of the positive sciences.

RATIONALISTIC DISSENT.

CHAPTER I.

RUSSIAN rationalism is of very ancient date. The great Protestant movement which began to agitate the whole Christian world in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and which culminated in the Reformation, had its feeble echoes even in far-distant and secluded Muscovy.

The new influence first became manifest in the northern commercial republics, which were more advanced in their culture and less prejudiced against foreigners. As early as 1370, we read that in the town of Pskov there was a sect founded by a Dean named Nikita, and a certain Karp, probably by profession a barber, at any rate so his surname of *Strigolnik* seems to indicate. The doctrine of the *Strigolniks*, or "barbers," as they were dubbed by the orthodox, was that of a rudimentary rationalism. They rejected the priesthood and the sacraments; they taught the people that they ought not to receive either Baptism or the Eucharist at the hands of

the priests. According to them, people could confess without the assistance of a clergyman : the penitents had only to prostrate themselves on the ground and whisper their sins to mother earth. Some of the adherents of the sect even went so far, it is said, as to reject the infallibility of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and resurrection of the dead.

The *Strigolniks* led a very severe ascetic life, devoted to fasting and prayers. They mixed little with their orthodox fellow-citizens, and are said to have been very proud, stiff, and unsociable. This, if we are to believe the statements of their opponents, was the chief cause of the odium in which they were held by the people of Pskov and of Novgorod. The sect had but a short existence, and was destroyed without the intervention of the authorities. The people of Pskov expelled them from the town, and a few years later they migrated to Novgorod, where the crowd laid hands on them and threw them from the Volchov bridge into the river.

A hundred years later, in the same town of Novgorod, there appeared an heretical rationalistic sect of much wider influence and importance—the so-called “*Judaisers*.” This sect was

founded about 1470-80 by a Jewish scholar, named Skhary or Zacharia. He had come to Novgorod from Lithuania in the suite of Alexander Olelkovitch, the last Prince of "free Novgorod." Skhary, whom the chroniclers mention as a man of great learning and acute intellect, took up his abode in Novgorod, and began an active propaganda among the most advanced theologians of the Christian Church. He attacked the dogma of the Trinity, the doctrine of the Redemption, the sacraments, the worship of the *ikons*, and the worship of the saints on logical grounds. He furthermore strongly objected to monastic celibacy as contrary to human nature.

All this was new and attractive to the Novgorod divines, who had hitherto had to exercise their minds on mere formalities. The first disciples who joined this Jewish scholar were two prominent clergymen, Alexy and Dionisy, and soon afterwards Gabriel, the Dean of Novgorod Cathedral. The more educated among the laymen soon followed their example, attracted by the clear logic and the simple and comprehensible ethics, which the new sect carefully elaborated.

In 1480 the Tzar, John III., paid a visit to Novgorod, and made the acquaintance of the two

chiefs of the sect, the *pops* Alexy and Dionisy, and on returning to Moscow took both of them with him to his Capital. The sect spread very rapidly at the court of Moscow, and among a group of the clergy. Some too of the most influential officials, and even members of the Tzar's own family, were in its favour. In ten years the sect had spread over the chief towns of the Empire.

In 1489 they obtained the nomination of Zossima, their secret adherent, to the headship of the Muscovite Church, a thing which no sect had ever before succeeded in doing. The Tzar himself lent a favourable ear to their teachings, but they had no root among the masses, so that the members of the orthodox Church, when roused from indifference by the passionate appeal of Hennady, obtained an easy and complete victory over them. The council, convened at Hennady's instigation, condemned the *Judaisers* as heretics, and deposed the Metropolitan. Zossima was permitted, by exceptional leniency on the part of the Tzar to end his days unmolested in a monastery. Some of the minor lights of the sect were delivered over to the tribunals and executed. The remainder dispersed, and the whilom powerful

sect vanished, we may safely say without leaving a trace behind. There exists, it is true, among the many popular sects of to-day a body of Sabbatarians which in some of its subdivisions reproduces the doctrines of the early *Judaisers*. It would, however, be perfectly absurd to suppose them connected by some mysterious links of heredity with a sect which only existed three hundred years before. The "Epistles" and the "Acts" show so many unmistakable proofs of the judaizing tendencies of some of the founders of Christianity, that they offer a perfectly satisfactory explanation of the spontaneous development of judaizing sects in Russia as well as in other countries.

The following generation offers another, but much more feeble manifestation of the same rationalistic tendencies, founded this time on a purely Christian basis. This movement is generally connected with the literary activity of a remarkable man, Maxim the Greek, an Albanian scholar, who succeeded in grafting upon the country of his adoption some elements of the vigorous European culture of his day.

Maxim the Greek studied in Paris, Venice, and Florence. He was a contemporary and a warm

admirer of Girolamo Savonarola. When summoned to Moscow, he could not help criticising the wooden formalism and narrowness of Russian religion.

There was nothing adverse to orthodoxy in the teachings of Maxim the Greek, though he was accused of "heresy" and condemned to life-long imprisonment. In his numerous writings and speeches he merely tried to persuade the Russians to give a little thought to their religion,—which was a great and dangerous service in that benighted epoch.

Prince Kurbsky tells us that at that time the orthodox priests themselves tried to damp the ardour of such young people as were lovers of book-lore and religious study. "Do not read many books," they said; "the source of all sin is reasoning: it is like the second fall. You have, forsooth, acquired superior wisdom, when lo! you stop to reason on some text; and behold! you have fallen into some heresy." Matvey Semenovitch Bashkin, condemned in 1555 for heresy, and probably burned alive—a vague but very touching figure—was probably one of those young people in whom such advice and warning were powerless to still the longing after light and truth.

During the Lent of 1554, Simeon, the *pop* of the Cathedral of the Annunciation, was approached by a stranger, who asked to be confessed. It was a well-to-do nobleman, Matvey Bashkin. At the confession, the penitent asked the *pop* questions as to the moral obligations and religious duties of men which appeared "awkward" to the *pop* Simeon. Bashkin showed him a book of Epistles full of marks, indicating those texts which had struck the reader most; he asked Simeon to explain some of these texts to him; but the *pop* not being a man of large resource, Bashkin offered his own explanations.

"Look," he said once, pointing to the gospel; "is it not written, 'For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'? and yet people all around us do nothing but torment one another. Christ ordered us to live like brothers, and we, being Christians, hold other Christians in bondage. I, thank God, have torn the *kabalas* I had on my men into pieces. Those who live on my estates do so of their own free will, and not because of my rights as a certificated slave-owner. If they are satisfied with me they remain, if not they are free to go whenever they like. You who

are our spiritual fathers, you ought to visit us laymen oftener, and to teach us how to live, and how to do our duty towards the people who are subjected to us."

This inquiring tone of mind and these ideas revealed a different spirit from that which then prevailed in the Muscovite Church. *Pop* Simeon was hurt, and denounced Bashkin, whose doctrine he termed "a debauchery." Bashkin was arrested and tried by the council in the following year, together with a small group of friends, among them some of the most educated and advanced of the clergy. When questioned, Bashkin summed up the theological part of his doctrine thus: "We reject the sacraments, the traditions of the Church, the worship of the saints, and their *ikons*. By 'the Church' we understand a congregation of believers, and not a human institution, still less a mere building of stones."

To these doctrines, which reflected the Protestantism of the West, Bashkin is supposed to have united the views of the Arians. "We do not recognise," he went on to say, "the divinity of the Son, nor his equality with the Father." It is difficult to determine what, in this profession of faith, represented the real views of the Russian

latitudinarians of the sixteenth century, and which were put into their mouths by the inquisitors. The very fact that Bashkin went to confession to a *pop* speaks against his rejection of the Sacraments, though this may perhaps have been the mere device of a propagandist to enter into communication with a man whom he expected to convert to his views. At all events, the general rationalistic character of Bashkin's heresy cannot be doubted.

Bashkin's ultimate fate is a matter of uncertainty. Popular tradition says that he was burned at the stake, though there is no mention of him in the official records. Popular rationalists of modern times look reverently upon Bashkin as the founder of their creed, though of course this title must be accepted only as an honorary one.

As another symptom of the fermentation going on in men's minds, we may also mention another interesting heresiarch,—Theodosius the Squint-eyed, whose heresy was discovered at about the same time as Bashkin's, but, according to Kostomarov, was not directly connected with it. Theodosius, or Fedosy, the Squint-eyed, was the first genuine self-taught *moujik* who, owing to his superior intelligence, appears at the head

of a sect. He was a serf on some nobleman's estate on the river Volga. He contrived to escape from his master, and for some years wandered as a vagabond under assumed names, till he found refuge, as so many of his fellow-vagabonds had done before him, in Balosero, one of the northern monasteries. Here he began to preach, and converted several of the brethren and some of the laymen of the neighbourhood. According to an account which some of his followers gave to a friend of theirs, Fedosy appears to have been a very bold thinker and a fine dialectician. He knew the Bible thoroughly, and was as skilful in the art of discovering heaps of texts in support of his opinions as the best of the *Rascolnik's* "readers" of more recent date. In many points the doctrine of Fedosy reminds us of that of Bashkin, though he went much farther. In his striving after a stricter monotheism, he rejected the divinity of the Son and his equality with the Father.

"How dared they," he was wont to ask, "insert in the creed, in reference to Jesus, the words 'begotten, not made,' when the Apostle Peter had said that God created Jesus? He did not say 'begot,' but created. And the Apostle Paul

likewise says : ‘ *There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*’ ”

Quoting numerous passages from the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Proverbs of Solomon, and the Prophets, Fedosy stigmatized *ikon*-worship as idolatry, and called the Churches “idol shrines,” and the *pops* “idol priests.” He rejected the Sacraments and the external rites of the Church, and showed a great respect for the books of Moses, which he called “fundamental ones.” He admitted men’s freedom to question even the authenticity of the Scriptures, rejecting, for instance, as unauthentic the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, which he attributed to some other man of the same name.

He differed from the Christians inasmuch as he denied the immortality of the soul, as well as the doctrine of the Redemption and of the fall of man. He taught that man was created mortal, as were all other living creatures. “Why should death mean something exceptional to man?” he asked. “The big fishes of the sea and the whales and serpents, the birds of the air and the beasts, the lions and elephants, who are the biggest creatures on the earth, all have to die, and nothing

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is left of them after death. All these are like men, creations of God."

Against the doctrine of the Redemption he urged that 'human' nature had undergone no change since the coming of Christ: "Men are as liable now as they were before to infirmities, death, and sin."

Fedosy the Squint-eyed, with one of his chief disciples, had the good luck to escape from the Moscow prison, thus avoiding the otherwise inevitable execution. He and his friend took refuge in Lithuania, where their propaganda is said to have met with great success.

Such were the most important of the early manifestations of religious rationalism in Russia. They are so exceedingly feeble, these dying echoes of the far-distant thunder, that but for the dead silence of everything around it would be difficult to catch the sound at all.

The real harbingers of rationalism, who carried its standard through the cold blasts of time and the blows of persecution, are two popular sects, —the *Dukhoborzy*, or "Champions of the Spirit," and the *Molokane*, or "Milk-eaters."

CHAPTER II.

THE *Dukhoborzy* and *Molokane* are of the same extraction, and the exterior forms of their worship are pretty much the same. For a long time they were confounded. Closer observation showed, however, a considerable difference between the *Molokane*, who are strict Christians of the Protestant type, and the *Dukhoborzy*, who have developed a sort of theosophy differing in some essentials from orthodox Christianity. It was generally thought that the more moderate and much more numerous *Molokane* was the elder of the two sects. The *Dukhoborzy* were supposed to be an offshoot generated as usual by a more extreme minority. This view has been adopted by Baron Haxthausen and other foreign writers. Modern investigations have, however, proved the contrary to be the case. The *Molokane* seceded from the *Dukhoborzy* during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and the *Dukhoborzy* is much the elder.

Nothing can be said with certainty about the origin of this sect, but the doctrines of the *Dukhoborzy* are so extremely complicated, and contain such strange ideas, that it is particularly unlikely that they should have been developed at one stroke on orthodox soil, without some previous work in the realm of thought having been expended in religious matters. Very probably we see in the *Dukhoborzy* and *Molokane* the two last links of a long series of transformations and religious efforts of the popular mind, links in a chain which it is impossible for us to review for lack of any written record.

Absorbed by the struggle with the powerful *Rascol*, the Government, disregarded the small body of rationalist dissenters, sometimes even confounding them with the extreme sect of ritualistic dissent. When the *Dukhoborzy* were first discovered in 1750-5 by the Imperial police, it was as a numerous and fully-organized body, with ramifications in four Provinces of the Empire. At their examination the *Dukhoborzy* of the village of *Okhochee* (Province of Kharkov) made a deposition in which some scholars thought to find a clue to the origin of the sect. On being asked by the police, who taught them their criminal faith,

the prisoners answered that they had learned it of a foreigner, a military man, who had stayed for many years among them and went away again, nobody knowing whither.

No particulars were given as to the nationality, the name, or the creed of this foreigner. In comparing dates it was conjectured that he must have been a prisoner of war taken during the seven years' campaign. As, after a superficial examination, the tenets of the *Dukhoborzy* were thought to be much the same as those of the Quakers, it was concluded that the mysterious stranger must have been a member of the Society of Friends.

This legend made the turn of the world and led to some curious disappointments. Whether it has some historical basis or not it is difficult to decide. A stranger who had learnt Russian and took an interest in popular religion may have lived in those parts, or he may never have existed at all, and the whole story about him be a fabrication of the accused *Dukhoborzy* in order to stave off the annoyances caused by the police. The inner-evidences of the *Dukhoborzy* doctrines make foreign influence very probable, but we must look for their sources rather to the East, or to the old

Christian heresies, than to modern Protestantism, and to an epoch in all probability much anterior to the seven years' war.

The base of the *Dukhoborzys'* creed is their conception of the Deity as the Soul of the World, the reasoning principle of the universe ; not as a Personal Being, superior to and independent of the world.

"The *Dukhoborzy*," says the Orthodox *Interlocutor* of 1859, "believe that God does not exist as a separate personal Being. The Deity, according to them, dwells in the souls of men, inseparable and indistinguishable from them, and unable to reveal its substance and glory otherwise than through them." The *Dukhoborzy* accordingly consider the soul of man to be a faithful image of God. With the above-named restrictions, the *Dukhoborzy* accept the dogma of the Trinity of the Godhead, and see it reproduced in the spiritual capacities of man,—God the Father is the Memory ; God the Son is the Reason ; God the Spirit is the Will.

They also accept the whole of the Scriptures, but in the spirit of symbolic individualisation. According to them, the whole of the New and the Old Testaments merely prefigure in some

spiritual way the mysteries which are accomplished in the soul of every faithful man.

The "Inner Word," or "Speculating Reason," which is identical with "God the Son," performs, in a spiritual sense, the office of redemption in the soul of every faithful human being; here it has its spiritual birth, here it preaches, works miracles, suffers, and brings to life—as Christ did on earth.

The fall of Adam is likewise merely a symbolisation of what is daily performed in the souls of men. The *Dukhoborzy* accept it as an historical event, but they deny the degenerating influence of the fall of the first man on all his descendants. Adam's fall was his individual fall, a source of misfortune and deterioration for his soul alone. They reject therefore the dogma of redemption and of incarnation. "We believe that Christ was only a good man," they said to Allan and Grilet, two English clergymen who came over to inquire whether the *Dukhoborzy* were really Russian Quakers, as it had been rumoured.

The Inner Word—the revelation of God in the soul of man—is the supreme authority in religious questions, and the source of all wisdom. The totality of that wisdom, possessed by the

whole Church, is what the *Dukhoborzy* understand to be the "Book of Life." This "Book" is traced out practically, by a vast number of religious hymns, meditations, precepts, and commentaries, of which every *Dukhoborzy* tries to retain in his memory as much as he can, that he may transmit it through oral tuition to his children. The share of this sacred knowledge enjoyed by each individual man is small, but the *Dukhoborzy* believe that the religious truth possessed by their Church as a whole is superior to that recorded in any of the Scriptures. "Ask our old people," they say; "they will teach you better."

The *Dukhoborzy* proudly consider themselves as the only true worshippers of God, and consider that the rest of mankind is wallowing in superstition and idolatry. They show, however, a remarkable and quite exceptional liberality of mind in determining who are to be considered as the true *Dukhoborzy*—champions of the spirit.

According to them, the Church is the congregation of those whom God himself has called from amongst the worldly and ordained to walk in the path of light. These chosen ones are not recognizable by any peculiar sign, nor are they associated with any outward religion. They form

an invisible Church, whose members are scattered all over the world and recognize the authority of many religions.

Thus there are people belonging to this Church not only among all Christian sects, but among those who do not study the Scriptures and who do not know Jesus Christ. It includes men of all nations, all races, and all tongues. Even among the Jews and the Turks, members of this Church may be found—all those who are guided by their “inner light,” and cultivate in their souls the seed of goodness (*Novizky*, 67-68, from “*Westnik Europy*,” 1880).

The *Dukhoborzy* believe, in their own fashion, in the immortality of the soul: God, who dwells in the souls of men, is immortal, therefore so are the souls; but they entirely reject the Christian conception of immortality. According to them, the individual immortality of a man consists “in the memory which the deceased leaves behind him among his fellow-men.” They do not believe in either hell or paradise. According to them, the promise of future life we find in the Scriptures refers to the future destinies of mankind on earth, and not to a life beyond the tomb in another world. “There will be no resurrection of the body,

and there will be no destruction of the visible world. Physical nature as the abode of an Eternal God will last for ever. The difference between the present life and the future is this : now the faithful have to live among sinners, whilst in the future they will overcome the sinners and will inherit the earth alone, though people will be born, will work, and die just as they do now."

Believing that souls are a part of God, which cannot perish at the destruction of the bodies, the *Dukhoborzy* admit the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Yet here we find a curious peculiarity, in opposition to the common version of this doctrine : the *Dukhoborzy* do not suppose that the soul enters the body before or at the moment of the birth of a child. The newly-born baby is only a piece of soulless matter.* According to the *Dukhoborzy*, the soul enters into the child's body gradually from about the sixth to the fifteenth year of its age, the period during which the child is learning from the "Book of Life," and the triune manifestation of the spirit—memory, reason, and

* This article of faith served as a ground for the absurd accusation brought against these people by the orthodox, of infanticide.

will—are developed and shaped in it. This indicates clearly in what, according to the *Dukhoborzy*, the transmigration of souls consists.

Whence have our *monjiks* got all these ideas? From India? from ancient Gnostics? Or are they the popular version of the views of some Western heresiarch? Or have they evolved them all out of their own heads by meditating on the Scriptures?

Any and all of these surmises may be true, though not one has more than mere conjecture to support it. As to the *Dukhoborzy* themselves, they have no distinct tradition as to the origin of their creed; or if you like they have, and a very strong one, but one which can hardly be of any use as an historical fact. They declare that the founders of their creed were the three youths whom King Nebuchadnezzar ordered to be thrown into a flaming furnace. Some again go back to still earlier times for the founder of their Church, and believe him to have been Abel, the first innocent man slaughtered, as so many of their own prophets and teachers have since been.

At all events, the formation and constant development of a similar doctrine among the simple, uneducated *monjiks* is a very suggestive fact, for

it must be borne in mind that all the *Dukhoborzy*, both past and present, are simple *moujiks*, tillers of the soil, or tradesmen. "Hitherto," says Haxthausen, "none of the educated classes have been found among these sects. No Russian clergyman has ever gone over to them or become their leader: their members are all ordinary Russian peasants. The more wonderful therefore, is the acuteness of intellect and force of imagination which they manifest, and which testify to the great intellectual gifts that still lie dormant in the Russian common people." *

So high, indeed, was the speculative part of the *Dukhoborzy* doctrine carried, that its followers often could not comprehend it so as to preserve its purity. The early *Dukhoborzy*, like the Jews of Moses' time, appear to have easily relapsed into certain lower forms of religion. They fell back on the worship of man, in this respect reminding us of the *Chlists*. The first of their authentic leaders, whose name has been preserved, was Silvan Kolesnikov, a peasant of the Province of Kharkov, who died an octogenarian. He is remembered as a man of wonderful eloquence and power of persuasion, as well as of great practical piety. Few men have ever contributed so much

towards the enlargement of the Book of Life as has this Patriarch of the pure *Dukhoborzy* Church. But in the next generation Savva Poberikhin, a peasant of the neighbouring Province of Tambov, played the part of a *Dukhoborzy* Aaron—only that instead of a golden calf he erected his own person as idol.

Poberikhin introduced a new dogma, proclaiming the eternal separateness of each transmigratory soul, and the possibility that during its wanderings it might retain the memory of its former state in its new habitation. This dogma was really intended to serve one purpose—the discovery of the abode of the soul of Jesus since his death. Poberikhin thought that God revealed himself in his wholeness in Jesus, having descended upon his soul at his thirtieth year, choosing him before all others because the soul of Jesus was the most perfect and pure that ever animated a human body. After the death of Jesus, his soul, in passing into the bodies of other men, had, by a special grace of God, always retained the remembrance of its former state. Every man whom it animated knew that he possessed the soul of Jesus. Savva Poberikhin named those whom in the olden times he supposed to have been

the guardians of this precious loan. For the present he declared that the real Jesus was himself, and he accordingly claimed a tribute of obedience and veneration suited to that high dignity. He obtained recognition, and established among the *Dukhoborzy* a sort of temporal theocracy, and surrounded himself with a body of zealots called "angels of death," because it was their duty, it is said, to punish those who resisted his orders, with death.

There are some indications, though these are not so well authenticated, of the appearance of other "Christs" of Poberikhin's type, in the earlier part of this century among the *Dukhoborzy*.

The doctrine introduced by Poberikhin was afterwards rejected as contrary to the essence of the *Dukhoborzy* theology, and in its application repugnant to their ideas regarding the social and political equality of all men as children and harbingers of God.

An almost religious respect for man is the basis of all mutual relations with the *Dukhoborzy*. They deny even paternal authority, which is, as a rule, so much respected among our patriarchal population. The family ties among the *Dukhoborzy* are being based on mutual affection, never on the

obedience due to a father. "The act of generation and of being born, with them constitutes no tie of relationship," says Haxthausen, in describing the colonies of this sect on the Molochnaia: "The soul, the image of God, recognizes no earthly father or mother; the body springs from matter as a whole; it is the child of the earth. With the body of the mother which bore it for a time, it stands in no nearer relationship than does the seed with the plant from which we pluck it. It is matter of indifference to the soul as to which prison, or body, it inhabits. There is only one father, the totality of God, who dwells in each individual; and one mother, universal matter, or nature, the earth. The *Dukhoborzy*, therefore, never call their parents 'father' and 'mother,' but only 'old man' and 'old woman.' In the same way a father calls his children not 'mine,' but 'ours' (the commune's). The men call their wives 'sisters.' Natural sympathies and instincts, however, are stronger than dogmas. Thus we have both heard and seen that the deep and affectionate veneration of children for their parents, and the tender love of parents for their children, which is a universal characteristic among the Russians, showed itself here likewise, in nearly

every relation of family life among the *Dukhoborzy*, outward signs of relationship only, being avoided."

The only claim to authority with them is the possession of a greater share of the divine revelation. Occasionally the *Dukhoborzy* have bowed to some man in whom they have recognized exceptional spiritual gifts; but, as a rule, their religion has harmonized with the popular feeling of democratic equality. The only permanent authority with the *Dukhoborzy* is that of the whole body of believers, the commune, whose collective light individuals are willing to recognise as being higher than their own.

From a sect professing such theories as these, as to human dignity and human rights, a Government which bore no other credentials for respect and obedience, than a display of brute force, can have expected no recognition: The *Dukhoborzy* consider the subjugation of one man to another by brute force as equivalent to an act of sacrilege. They accordingly denounce the present Government as an abomination before God.

It would be a mistake to conclude from this that the *Dukhoborzy* are practically so many revolutionists, only waiting for an opportunity to put their philosophical convictions to the test.

A religious negation and a political negation are two quite different things. The very elevation of the *Dukhoborzy's* theosophy, from which they draw such excellent conclusions, helps to divert their minds, and to create for them a world of their own, whither they transport their negations and affirmations in a perfectly innocuous and even stingless state. The sect of the *Beguny*, for example, with their narrow doctrine of Antichrist, contains far more of the pugnacious spirit, which would answer a direct appeal to rebellion. Who, however, can stand their apocalyptic nonsense, and who can expect to make anything out of it? As for the *Dukhoborzy*, they are, and always have been, very peaceful citizens. Outbursts of fanaticism against the established Church or the Government have been of much rarer occurrence amongst them than amongst the extreme section of the *Rascol*. As long as the orders of the Government have not been in direct opposition to their creed, they have offered no resistance, and have scrupulously paid their taxes. With them the negation of the Tzar's authority was therefore strictly a matter of "conscience." They themselves offered no provocation, even by deliberate roughness of language. The *Dukhoborzy*, when

arrested, without saying anything untrue, always tried to conceal their higher and more dangerous articles of faith from the inquisitors, by abstruse, ambiguous subtleties of language,—a feat of war in which they were very skilful. Still, the police had no difficulty in getting scent of the kind of views held by the *Dukhoborzy* with regard to the authorities.

This gave rise to frightful persecutions, to which they have been subject so late as the middle of the present century, when purely religious persecutions were no longer possible.

The penalties inflicted on the political offenders of the educated classes—from the Decembrists to the Nihilists—reflect but a faint image of what the guileless *Dukhoborzy* and their younger brothers the *Molokane* have had to undergo almost uninterruptedly for the space of about sixty years. Catherine II., very tolerant with the *Rascol*, persecuted the *Dukhoborzy* fiercely, when they were first discovered at about the close of her reign.

Savage Paul I., on being informed that the *Dukhoborzy* denied his authority, gave orders that “all the adherents and members of this pernicious sect, unworthy of any clemency, should be banished to the Siberian mines for life, and set to do the hardest work, and that they should

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never have the chains removed from their hands and feet; in order that they who deny the supreme authority of earthly potentates, enthroned by the will of God, should feel sharply on their own bodies that there are authorities on earth established by God for the defence of the good, and for the terror and chastisement of villains like themselves" (*Ukaz* of Aug. 28th, 1799).

Hundreds upon hundreds of the *Dukhoborzy* have been seized, fiercely knouted, and then sent to the mines. Sometimes in addition they have had to undergo the barbarity of bodily mutilation.

When Paul I. was killed and Alexander I. ascended the throne, the *Dukhoborzy* enjoyed a short respite. The young Emperor, greatly moved by the report of two senators about the sufferings inflicted on perfectly innocent people, issued a tolerant *ukaz*, and permitted the *Dukhoborzy* to establish a vast colony of their own on the River Molochnaia, in the Province of Taurida. The second and reactionary half of Alexander I.'s reign again changed the position of the *Dukhoborzy* much for the worse.

On the advent of Nicolas I., with his well-known jealousy of his authority, the *Dukhoborzy* and the *Molokane* entered into the gloomiest period of

the existence. In 1826, the year after his accession, Nicholas I. issued an *ukaz* that all the able-bodied *Dukhoborzy* and *Molokane* should be enrolled in the army, and those unqualified for military service exiled to Siberia.

Thus the alternatives before them were recantation or, Siberia, or the "red hat," *i.e.*, compulsory enrolment for the twenty-five years of military service,—a fate which our people had in those days ample grounds for dreading as much as the Siberian hulks. It was decreed, moreover, that the *Dukhoborzy* recruits should be sent to the Caucasian corps, then in permanent war with the Circassian tribes. As the *Dukhoborzy* (together with the *Molokane*) strictly object on religious grounds to the profession of arms, this was a terrible trial to them.

They did not decline to fulfil the peaceful, everyday duties of the service, but when brought face to face with the enemy, they threw their arms to the ground and refused to march or to fire. The most awful corporal punishment awarded under the military code could not make them obedient, so that after a time the Commander of the Caucasian army was compelled to pray the Emperor not to send him *Dukhoborzy* or *Molokane*,

who "demoralized" the soldiers by their example and their propaganda; for wherever these sectarians appeared they at once made converts. From Siberia, the Governor of the Eastern Provinces, General Soulema, in 1835 reported to the Emperor upon the necessity of isolating the *Dukhoborzy* from other people.

As soon as one of the *Dukhoborzy* appeared amongst them, were it in a prison or in a mine or in some far-off village, the conversions to the sect began at once. In the Siberian hulks and mines the propagandism of the sect assumed such large proportions that an order was issued to send all the *Dukhoborzy* to one mine—that of Nerchinsk—the deadliest of them all. As to those condemned to deportation, they had to be settled among the aboriginal savages who did not understand Russian. In 1839 the same remedy—i.e. paralysing the *Dukhoborzy* propaganda by isolation among aliens—was applied on a large scale to the big Molochnaia Colony.

Profiting by a false denunciation * of the Council

* Made by a police officer to whom blackmail had been refused. This has been proved by the researches of Mrs. Filiber, made on the spot in 1867, whilst the facts of the case were still fresh in men's minds.

of the Elders, the Government ordered all the eight thousand *Dukhoborzy*, men, women, and children, either to recant or to be transported to Transcaucasia. This barbarous measure was put into force during the years 1839-41, causing indescribable suffering, and condemning this hard-working people to many years of misery.

All these severities and cruelties did not extirpate the sect. Rationalistic dissent, in both its forms, spread with particular rapidity during Nicolas I.'s time. The last five years of his reign show a gradual relaxation, almost cessation, of the persecutions. The Emperor seemed tired. After twenty-five years' experience, the idea that the knout is not an efficient weapon in spiritual warfare seemed to penetrate even his dull brain.

CHAPTER III.

THE doctrine of the *Dukhoborzy* had the deepest influence on the development of religious thought throughout the whole body of our nonconformists. This sect was a kind of ready-made parent stem of popular philosophy, from which many of the extreme sects of all descriptions, the ritualist as well as the rationalist, had borrowed their boldest doctrines. The *Dukhoborzy* creed in its primitive form, however, was preserved by a comparatively small body of people. The *Dukhoborzy* proper probably now numbers about fifty thousand people. Their chief centres are in the provinces of Tambov, Ekaterinoslav, Saratov, and in Transcaucasia, with a sprinkling in the Central Provinces, in Southern Siberia, and in Transbaicalia.

The *Molokans* sect was a transformation and simplification of the *Dukhoborzy* into a strictly rationalistic Christian sect. They have altogether dropped the superstructure of the *Dukhoborzy*'s

theosophy, and have developed a rational and comprehensive system of popular ethics. The secession of the *Molokane* took place about 1770.

When Savva Poberikhin, whom we have already mentioned, declared himself and was accepted as the *Dukhoborzy's* Christ, his son-in-law, Semen Uklein, a tailor of the same village, disagreed with him, and fearing his vengeance left the village of Horki and went to preach among the peasants in the Province of Tambov. In him the *Molokane* recognised the founder of their creed. The official records of the activity of Semen Uklein are scanty. It is known that he was arrested and kept for a time in Tambov prison. After his liberation he went to preach again, was arrested once more, knouted, and sent to Siberia.

Nothing more was heard of him. But the seeds he had scattered evidently fell on favourable ground.

In 1802, the *Molokane* formed a regularly constituted sect, and in the *Molochnaia* colony requested to have their Communes separate from those of the *Dukhoborzy*. During Nicolas I.'s reign they spread very rapidly, cropping up all over the Western, Central, and Southern regions.

It is impossible to fix the number of the *Molokane* with exactitude, owing to the absence of reliable statistics. Bushen's tables fix the number of registered *Molokane* and *Dukhoborzy* combined, at 110,000. Deducting the *Dukhoborzy*, this would only leave about 60,000 for the *Molokane*. The figure is evidently too small. In the province of Tambov alone, according to official records, the number of the *Molokane* registered and unregistered reached, in 1842-46, the figure of 200,000. (*Vestnik Evropy*, 1880, VI.)

There are besides this *Molokane* settlements in many other places: in the Provinces of Riazan, Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, and all along the southern part of the Volga, for instance.

On the whole, the *Molokane* cannot be compared as far as numbers go with any of the big *Rascol* sects. The old rationalistic sects absorbed only a small fraction of our population—some hundreds of thousands only. The *Molokane*, however, greatly outnumber the *Dukhoborzy*.

They are subdivided into Sabbatarian and non-Sabbatarian *Molokane*. But the former constitute a mere handful, five to six thousand all told. The bulk are non-Sabbatarian Chris-

ties, and present a rare uniformity in their doctrine and religious observances.

We cannot give a more graphic and clear idea of this important sect than by quoting a few pages from the personal reminiscences and impressions of our historian N. Kostomarov, who has enjoyed exceptional opportunities of observing them during the several years of his exile in Saratov.

"I had much difficulty," says N. Kostomarov, "in overcoming the excessive diffidence of these sectarians towards every stranger. At last I was introduced, by a common friend, to a Sabbatarian teacher, a fisherman by trade. He was, I was told on good authority, the most obstinate and most learned of all the congregation. His very meagre face, furrowed by the wrinkles which always denote a passion for thinking; his sunken but glittering, fiery eyes; a long lean neck; lips twitching from impatience; the hurry to pour out in a moment what can only be told in time; finally, the habit of tracing figures in the air with his fingers whilst speaking—a habit which I have often noticed among our peasant-philosophers—all showed me at once that I was in the presence of one of those fanatics who govern sects and inspire

heresies. He knew the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament, almost by heart. He was well read in ecclesiastical history, and poured out names and dates from memory after the manner of a 'crack' pupil before a board of examiners."

In his religious views this honoured friend was a strict Unitarian. He recognised in Jesus Christ a great prophet, a man inspired by God, as Isaiah and others had been. He believed in his miracles, and even in his resurrection, but emphatically rejected the dogma of his divinity.

He saw no proof of the Trinity of God either in the Old or in the New Testament. There God is everywhere represented as being One; Jesus Christ is his prophet, who calls himself, and is called by the apostles, a man. The Holy Ghost means God's grace and wisdom bestowed upon man, and not the third person of the Trinity. He explained that the Sabbatarians accepted the whole of the New Testament as inspired, but as they saw in Jesus Christ only one of the prophets, they gave no precedence to those books over the old ones. They therefore consider the Mosaic laws to be as binding nowadays as they were to the contemporaries of Jesus. They keep Saturday as their day of prayer; they eat nothing that

is prohibited by Moses; they reject, as offensive to the dignity of God, all material representations of divinity. Many are circumcised: Kosomarov's friend was of the number, and he had circumcised his sons. He held that his co-religionists ought to offer sacrifices according to the ancient law. "The modern Jews do not offer sacrifices," he said, "because they are in exile; but we, who are the new Israel,—we ought to offer sacrifices."

Of the Jewish law he recognised only the written one. The posterior superstructure of Judaism was exceedingly distasteful to him. He called the Talmud "a collection of foolish ravings." He expected the coming of the Messiah because the promise of the Prophets was as yet unfulfilled, as Jesus was not a Messiah but only a great prophet. He called it a gross superstition on the part of modern Jews to believe in a Messiah—King and Conqueror. He tried to prove that the promised dominion of Israel must be understood in a spiritual sense, as signifying the reign of truth and reason, and not as the establishing of a great political power. According to him, the promised Messiah will be a great philosopher and moral teacher, who will discover to mankind

the greatest truths, and will scatter the *Mosaic* creed all over the world, and thus establish the reign of universal happiness on earth.

His views as to the Future Life and God's providence towards mankind presented a sort of compromise between the teachings of the Old and of the New Testaments. He believed in a Future Life beyond the tomb, on the authority of the New Testament, though he found no word about it in the Old; but he rejected the doctrine of hell. He believed that God will in the Future Life forgive all infidels and sinners, whom he chastises for their transgressions here on earth just as he did in the old biblical times. Wars, pestilences, famines, and fire, and all the tribulations of this earthly existence, are but punishments inflicted by God for the people's unbelief. After the coming of the Messiah, he will spread the true faith all over the world, and peace and happiness will reign for ever.

The rites and worship of the Sabbatarians of Russia Proper contain nothing Jewish. On Saturdays they assemble in their houses of prayer, where their elders or teachers deliver a sermon, which is interrupted from time to time by the sacred songs of the congregation. The Sabba-

They hold these meetings in great secrecy, and, as a rule, conceal their affiliation to the sect. The criminal code, which still punishes conversion to "Judaism" with deportation and hard labour, and the easily-aroused aversion of the surrounding Christian peasantry, are sufficient grounds for this. A lady, friend of mine, a Socialist, who lived among the *Molokane* peasantry for the sake of propagandism, was once invited by her hostess, a Sabbatarian, to one of their secret meetings, when a famous wandering preacher of the sect was expected to speak. She was instructed not to speak to anybody and not to answer any questions. On entering the house they had to give a pass-word.

As to the service, it was very unlike that of the Russian Jews. The small congregation was seated in rows on wooden benches on one side of the room. Opposite there was an open space, on which stood the preacher, in silent prayer, clad in a sort of black mantle, with an open Bible before him. When all were assembled and the doors shut, he delivered a prayer, animated by the broad Deistic spirit of the Jews, and then began to address the audience. He spoke about God, the Soul, Penitence, and Salvation in the

same Unitarian spirit, appealing with great power to the emotions of his hearers. After a very pathetic allocution he fell to the ground, as overwhelmed by the vehemence of his feelings. Then he rose and intoned a hymn, which was taken up by the congregation, and then resumed his preaching.

Among the non-Sabbatarian *Molokane* the service is more simple, being stripped of anything theatrical or showy. It merely consists in readings from the Bible, interrupted now and again by some pious observation or comment from the reader. There is neither a peculiar dress nor permanency attached to the office of reader. There are generally, in each congregation, some five or six people who are tacitly admitted to be the most versed in the Scriptures, and one of these takes the chair and reads, indiscriminately. At intervals, and at the beginning and conclusion of the service, a choir sings psalms. The tunes are various, and generally very pleasing—something between the regular Church music and the melodies of our national songs. It is a pity that our collectors of popular songs have paid no attention to the religious melodies of some of our nonconformists.

The Sabbatarian colony in the Caucasus, where they were deported in Nicolas I.'s time, have developed into a sect much more nearly allied to Judaism than that of their Russian co-religionists. They accept the Talmud, and they expect the Messiah in the guise of a King and Conqueror, who is to appear at the close of the seven thousandth year, dating from the creation of the world (Mosaic style). They follow the Jewish ritual in the marriage ceremony and the burial service, and permit divorce; and they use the Jewish prayers in a Russian translation.

Among the Caucasian Sabbatarians we meet with another curious sub-division of the sect—the so-called *Herrrs*, who are as completely judaised as is possible to any of their nationality. They elect a born Jew as Rabbi, and they pray in the Jewish language, which they try to learn. The number of these Russian *moujiks* who strive for the sake of their creed to become Jews is small, about one thousand—one-fifth of the whole body of Sabbatarians. None of the branches of this sect give any sign of great vitality. They do not increase, and they have no influence on the popular religious movements among the masses. They are shunned, and in their turn shun the people.

Nevertheless, as one of our theological curiosities, they must not be ignored.

The *Molokane* proper present, on the contrary, a sect which above all is distinguished by its spirit of proselytism.

"It would be difficult for me"—we return to the reminiscences of our celebrated historian—"to forget two men to whom I owe most of my information about the doctrine of the *Molokane*. One of them, with whom we became fast friends, a worthy man, formerly a member of the sect, has long since passed over to the orthodox Church. The priest of his parish considers him to be the most zealous and virtuous member of the congregation. There was, however, a time when he was looked upon as being most learned and dangerous among the propagandists of the *Molokane* heresy. Scores of people were won over by him from the orthodox Church. It was rumoured that in those days none could resist his intellectual power. It sufficed that he should have one or two hours' talk with a man; then if his interlocutor were not so obstinate as to remain deaf to his arguments, notwithstanding his own inner conviction, the heresiarch was sure to convert him. There was in him a power of logic, accompanied by a sort of

incontestible personal fascination, which predisposed the interlocutors in his favour. He knew a lot of tricks, and applied them with great ability, putting insoluble questions to his opponent, confounding him, and deducing from his opinions contradictions and absurdities.

“ His greatest exploit as a dialectician was about the year 1820, in the reign of Alexander I., before the Emperor gave free play to the spirit of reaction. The *Molokane* were in the enjoyment of comparative toleration, and the bureaucracy had not as yet extended its attentions to the region of the Volga, which still remained a vast wilderness.

“ With the accession of Nicolas I. began the era of persecution. The Saratov *Molokane* preserve bitter recollections of these hard times, up to the present day. There was among them a certain Isaëff, a zealous and obstinate preacher. Some honest priests had, in the kindness of their hearts, tried to persuade him to give up his errors, but in vain. Isaëff was so skilful a dialectician that he confounded and routed the priests themselves. After several ‘correctional’ punishments, he was indicted before the criminal court and condemned to the knout. He expired on the scaffold under the blows of this instrument, which was applied

to his back with particular ferocity because he obstinate heretic refused to make any recantation.

"Then the priest declared that the devil had taken the soul from the body of the heretic juhn knouted to death, and had placed it in the living body of a certain Trofim, who thus becoming possessed of two souls, his own, and Isaeffs, began to preach with twice the ardour of the deceased. The propagandism of Trofim was soon brought to a close, however, and his voice silenced by the knout, like that of his predecessor.

"It was at this time that my friend passed over to the orthodox Church. Having been the foremost in deeds, he had reason to expect that he would also be the foremost in punishment. But he assured me that his change of faith was the result of conviction, ascribing his conversion to the reading of the Fathers of the Church, such as St. John Chrysostom."

The other *Molokane* leader mentioned by N. Kostomarov, a man of a younger generation, fairly illustrates the changes wrought by modern thought upon the best elements of our rural classes, both nonconformists and orthodox. A staunch and inflexible adherent of his creed, he had endured for it, several years of arbitrary im-

ment. Purely theological questions did not, however, absorb his awakening intelligence, and he strove for something else besides. "He was a man of surpassing natural intelligence," says our historian. "He had picked up some knowledge here and there out of the few books he could obtain, and felt deeply the necessity of a broader education. The fact that his co-religionists were deprived of any means of substantial education, and were thus compelled to limit their reading to the Scriptures, afflicted him sorely. He showed a lively interest in modern secular literature, and in the many questions, both social and political, discussed therein. He was, in a word, a man who excited in me a mixed feeling of respect and sorrow :—great is the number of people, endowed with such high gifts, who perish nowadays among our rural population under the weight of circumstances."

The *Molokane* call themselves Spiritual Christians, a title very appropriate to their doctrines ; but they do not object to be called *Molokane*, which simply means *milk-eaters*. This was originally a nickname given to them by the orthodox commonalty, because they keep no fasts and use milk freely on fast-days. By twisting

an expression of St. Paul's about the "milk" of Christian love, they made the name square with their views.

The *Molokane* are strict Christians, and even orthodox as regards the fundamental theological dogmas. They accept in its entirety the Christian conceptions of God, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the human soul, and the life beyond the grave. They do not trouble themselves with theosophy and cosmogony, as their elder brothers the *Dukhoborzy* do. Their doctrine commended itself to the people by its perfect sobriety and absence of any tendency to mysticism. They do not recognise "inspiration," or the "inner word," as of supreme authority in matters pertaining to faith, accepting the Bible as the only base of their religion. They, however, distinguish two things in the Scriptures—the letter, and the spirit, or sense. They completely neglect the former, accepting the sense, or meaning of the Scriptures, as they understand it, for guidance. Thus they reject all external signs of worship, from the *ikons* and mass down to the sign of the Cross. They reject likewise all the sacraments, Baptism and Eucharist included, as unnecessary, though they fully recognize that the first of these sacraments

were performed by the apostles, and the second by Jesus Christ. They believe that these outward signs were meant only as a means for the better singling out of the early Christians from the heathen population by which they were surrounded. Now that Christianity has become an inherited creed, professed by entire nations, there is no need for these outward distinctions.

"The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," quote the *Molokane*. Baptism in itself is inefficient; it cannot aid in the salvation of the soul, because it can neither prevent the baptised from doing that which is evil nor screen him from the punishment he will thereby merit. A man christened in childhood may remain in total darkness as to God's commandments; he may yet live as a heathen, and has therefore no right to bear the name of Christian; whereas if a man has not been plunged in the baptismal font, but yet believes in Christ and fulfils all his commandments, is it possible that he shall be damned? On sending his Apostles to preach the Gospel to the world, Jesus Christ commanded them, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe

all things whatsoever I have commanded ~~and~~" The *Molokane* conclude from this that by Baptism is meant the purification and renewing of man by the teachings of Christ. They quote many passages from Scripture in which the word "water" is used metaphorically, in the sense of "doctrine;" for instance, in the prophecy that "living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." If, say the *Molokane*, immersion in water is essential to salvation, because thus runs the letter of the Scriptures, why should we not take the word "fire" in the same literal sense, and burn ourselves as some *Rascolniks* do?

The *Molokane* argue in a similar spirit to account for their rejection of the Eucharist. The Sacrament is to be accepted in a spiritual sense, representing, through a thorough impregnation, on the part of the believer, with the doctrines of the Gospels, so close a communion with Christ as to make him one with Christ in blood and body, and able to destroy, in himself, any sinful impulses.

This kind of communion alone is efficacious as a means to salvation, whereas those who eat of the holy wafer and drink of the consecrated wine in church are not in the least improved thereby,

and continue to sin as before, nor are they preserved from condign punishment.

As regards marriage, which the orthodox Church considers to be a sacrament, they say : Are the unchristian life and mutual offences between a husband and wife sanctified by their having been wedded in a church ? Mutual love and confidence, that it is which makes marriage sacred, not the rite. God created men and women, and established a law that they should unite. If they have chosen one another, and mutual love is kindled in their hearts, it means that God has singled them out for one another and blessed them, to love each other and to live in friendship and peace, and not to separate. If there is no longer union and confidence between them, it is better that they should part company.

Marriage among the *Molokane* is based exclusively on the wishes of the young people. The parents have no right to interfere, beyond the point to which the children should be inclined to allow them to go. They have no power to force their will, even by refusing them material assistance towards setting up a new house. The *mir* would interpose, and compel the fathers to give their share of property to the young people.

The ceremony of marriage is reduced and a public declaration by the contracting parties. The elder reads some appropriate passage from the Scriptures—the account of Tobias' marriage for instance—delivers a short address, and invokes the blessing of God upon the young couple. b

Divorce is permitted by the *Molokane*, though practically hardly known amongst them. The well-established habit of mutual deference between the sexes, helps to preserve the union when once contracted, more effectually than any canonical prescription could do.

We will not here expend more time on the further exposition of other details of the *Molokane's* creed.

The former examples suffice to illustrate the peculiar bent of their doctrines. In their striving after the sense and spirit of the Scriptures, they may be accepted as a protest on the part of the popular mind against the extreme formalism of the State Church. Yet, as far as the dogmatic part of their doctrine is concerned, the *Molokane* keep within the bounds of Protestantism. They disagree with the Protestants in some of their conclusions, but adhere to the same method: they hinge all their opinions on the documentary

evidence of the Scriptures; they compare one text with another; they comment on the Scriptures by the lights borrowed from the Scriptures.

But the *Molokane* apply their usual principle of separating the kernel from the husk, to the historical part of the Scriptures, which puts them on a somewhat different footing. In all the Gospels and in the Bible they seek after the spiritual sense and the moral idea conveyed by the narrative.

"There are parts of the Scriptures," they say—"the parables—which are plainly given to us as stories which never happened in reality, but are intended to convey certain moral or religious lessons. Suppose that the whole of the Gospel is only a Parable, which by God's Providence was written for our edification; men can use it for their salvation all the same." The *Molokane* do not really deny the historical side of the Gospel. They only think that a man might doubt the historical value of all, or some part, of the Scriptures, and yet need not thereby necessarily cease to be a Christian, the Scriptures, according to them, being intended as a source of moral perfection for humanity. This perfection can be attained by any man who has assimilated the high

doctrines contained in the Gospels, and ~~are~~ according to them; but not by a mere belief in the reality of the events described there. Whether these events happened exactly as they are represented in the Scriptures; or whether, owing to the great lapse of time, they have reached us in a modified form—this is, according to the *Molokane*, a question of history, not of religion. The Gospel remains a Divine revelation, whatever be the solution of the controversy.

Leaving the question of the theological significance of these views alone, it is easy to see that the *Molokane* have remained throughout, faithful to the national spirit of our people. Moved by the same intellectual need of a reasoned-out and freely-chosen religion which inspired the Protestants of the West, they drew from the Bible and developed with great consistency* their fundamental doctrine of *Salvation by Good Works* as opposed to the doctrine of *Salvation by Faith* held by the individualistic West.

The modern sects, which shall be described in the following chapter, exhibit exactly the same tendency. Though they have sprung up quite independently of *Molokane* influence, they stand to the latter in the same relation as the *Molokane*

stance to the *Dukhoborzy*; they have simplified their theology in order to render their ethics more comprehensive and accessible to the mind of the people. That is why they have obtained such an unprecedented success.

In the first quarter of this century we see among the *Molokane* some interesting attempts to carry the Christian ideals of social life and organization to their full length. In 1820 a remarkable man, Maxim Akenfievitch Popoff, a peasant of the Province of Samara, began to preach the communism of the early Christians to his fellow *Molokane*. After several years of untiring effort, he succeeded in bringing all his fellow-villagers over to his views. They accepted his plan of social reform and organisation. Private property was abolished altogether; all the money they possessed was brought to the common bank, and the herds of cattle declared to be the common property of the whole village. Field labour and most of the household labour was performed in common. The commune elected special officials, members of seven denominations, as judges, a cashier, a teacher, and several directors, both male and female, to superintend the various branches of work. Together they formed an

administrative council, which decided upon every question.

The example of Nicolaevka produced a great effect among all the surrounding villages. Some of them, Yablonovka and Tiagloe-Ozero, for instance, joined in a body, and introduced the organization proposed by Popoff. In others, his followers were active in propagating his doctrines.

At this juncture, however, Popoff was arrested and exiled to Transcaucasia. For several years he had to suffer many hardships there, but after a time succeeded in winning another village over to his views, and organised a new communistic association on the same plan. He was re-arrested, and this time exiled to Siberia.

The communistic experiments started by him held their ground for some time, but the communes gradually returned, one after another, to the old methods, and re-established the ordinary system of land tenure and private property. The Transcaucasian followers of Popoff, forming several villages, containing five hundred and forty-five families in all, have preserved from their ancient communistic organisation only the following form of mutual assistance. They give every tenth rouble, and every tenth sack of corn they

invest, to charity. The task of distributing this is superintended by a judge and a cashier.

About twenty years later, in the middle of the present century, another *Molokane* teacher, Lukian Sokoloff, made a second attempt in the direction of Christian Communism, but without any marked success.

This was more than the people could put up with, and, after the religious excitement had subsided, they declined to try it. The bulk of the *Molokane* do not go beyond the social and economical principles common to all Russian peasants.

Constant meditation on matters pertaining to religion, in the broad and rational spirit of their creed, and the diligent and intelligent study of the Bible, have, in the course of two or three generations, made the *Molokane* the most intellectually developed body amongst the whole of our rural population. Then, too, the *Molokane* are always much better off than their orthodox brethren,—all sectarians are, the “rational” as well as the perfectly irrational ones. The community of religious interests has developed amongst all of them a spirit of cohesion and mutual assistance, which makes them proof

against external pressure, especially when isolated and persecuted, as the *Molokane* were up to quite recent times. Though based on the same principle, the communal life of the *Molokane* is infinitely superior to that of the common Orthodox. If we want to see what a genuine Russian *mir* can be, when composed of intelligent and well-to-do peasants, we must go among the *Molokane*.

As regards the Imperial Government, the *Molokane* are not so straightforward as the *Dukhoborzy*. They do not deny it altogether, adopting St.^o Paul's teaching in matters of civil authority, but they do not consider implicit allegiance to be a Christian duty. They resist, though passively, all orders contrary to their convictions; they do not take oaths, either before the tribunals nor when enrolled into the army, and they do not fight. The Government has been compelled to put up with these insuperable aversions. The *Molokane* (and the *Dukhoborzy*) are enrolled without being sworn, and are told off to non-fighting departments of the army.

MODERN SECTARIANISM.

CHAPTER I.

IN passing from the rationalistic, sects of old standing to the modern ones, we shall have to deal with a series of denominations of very recent date. The most conspicuous of these, the *Stunda*, is only seventeen years old. The famous Sutaev founded his sect about the year 1877. The oldest, the *Shalaput*, assumed its present rationalistic character about the year 1860. Other sects of the same class date their existence from yesterday

Only one of these sects has been studied in a thoroughly satisfactory manner. Of many we know little but the name. Yet what we do know about modern sectarianism is sufficient to show that we are in the presence, not of a few new sects alone, but of a new and important phase in the religious history of our people

First of all, one peculiarity of the present religious movement must be noted. It was started among the Southern Russians (Ruthenians),

known in the past for, their unswerving orthodoxy and indifference to sectarianism. It spread thence chiefly among the orthodox population of Great Russian descent, amongst whom sects of exactly the same character have been spontaneously formed. The new sects invade the *Rascol*, making converts at its expense.

Formerly the lead in any religious movement was invariably taken by the *Rascol*, the religious elements animating the orthodox population being too feeble, both numerically and intellectually, to form independent nuclei. Religious people passed over to the various sects of the *Rascol*, swelling that huge body of from twelve to fifteen millions of people, contributing thus, by the infusion of new elements, to keep it brisk and healthy.

The *Molokane* and *Dukhoborzy* were the only sects which grew on their own ground, independently of the *Rascol*. But these sects only attracted the picked men from among the orthodox masses. They spread steadily but slowly. In the hundred years covering their historical existence they hardly mustered more than half a million of adherents. The modern sects, on the contrary, spread with the rapidity which is

characteristic of genuine popular movements. By 1878, according to Yousoff, these new sects, after some ten or twelve years of existence, had won over more, or at least as many, adherents as the *Molokane* and *Dukhoborzy* had done in a century.

The Russian Government is very unwilling to advertise its weaknesses. We have therefore no official figures as to the progress of modern sectarianism during the last decade ; but the special council of bishops, held under the presidency of Pobedonoszew himself (September 1884, at Kieff), the repeated circulars of the Holy Synod, enjoining the clergy to boldly fight the spread of popular Protestantism,²—all prove that the movement has not slackened.

In a recent telegram from the St. Petersburg correspondent of a morning paper we are told that the *Stunda* is supposed, by well-informed persons, to be *several millions strong* in the south of Russia (*Daily News*, November 24th, 1887).

No religious movement in Russia has shown half the same power of contagion. The great *Rascol* of the seventeenth century, if the reader remembers, mustered, after the first twenty-five

years of its existence, a mere handful of people—nothing when compared with these new sects.

This movement is so sprightly and fresh, so full of young reformatory zeal, that it is not easy to determine its precise formulation; but its novelty affords us, on the other hand, a precious opportunity for the immediate observation of the very process of its creation, and for feeling the very palpitation of the popular heart, which seeks in religion a solace for its pains and the satisfaction of its yearnings.

The sect which is the most carefully studied, and which is in many respects the most characteristic, is that of the *Stunda*, or Evangelicals, as they prefer to call themselves. None afford a better insight into the inner motives and impulses at work within the new sectarian movement. The *Stunda* being at the same time the most numerous and the most pushing, these observations are of the greatest general interest.

The *Stunda* was founded under the direct influence of the German Protestants settled in Southern Russia. The sect still preserves the traces of its origin in the name given to it. The word *Stunda*, according to Znachko Yavorski, is derived from *Stunde*, or "the hours," as the

church service was called among the Germans of the same persuasion in the German colony of Rorbach.

The founder of the sect, Michael Ratushny, a peasant of the neighbouring village of Osnova, worked there as a wage labourer for several summers. He was invited by his employer, a German *Stundist*, to take part in their services. They talked about religious matters, the *Stundist* advocating the superiority of Protestantism over orthodoxy. Ratushny was much impressed by what he saw and heard. On returning home for the winter he talked the matter over with his fellow-villagers. He had no intention as yet of founding a new sect, as he afterwards explained at his first trial. Everything happened quite naturally and unexpectedly to himself.

“One day,” he said, “at a village meeting the people began to discuss spiritual matters, and the priest who was present could not explain anything to the people’s satisfaction. Thereupon I felt within myself a burning desire to understand God’s words with my own mind, and to explain them to others. There were many people desirous of hearing me, and I went on teaching the Gospel, as I understood it myself, to all of them.”

Thus was the first nucleus of the *Stunda* gradually formed at Osnova during the years 1864-66.

There was no spirit of proselytism among the German Protestants, who had lived side by side with the Russians for a hundred years without making any converts. Neither did any of them pass over to the Russians to preach among them now; but Ratushny and several of the early *Stundists* repeatedly visited the Germans of Rorbach. It was natural that they should wish for more detailed instructions from those who had been the first to awaken within them a new religious life. It is certain that the German *Stundists* contributed much towards giving definite shape and formulation to the creed of their early Russian brethren, though at the trials the latter wisely kept silence on the matter, so as not to get their German friends into trouble.

The early *Stunda* fully accepted the Protestant catechism, the Protestant sacraments, and the ritual of the ~~service~~. The simplicity of the Presbyterian service, so well suited to the tastes of our people, has been preserved up to the present time, but in other respects the Russian *Stunda* very soon underwent a modification. It rejected the two Protestant sacraments. One branch of the sect—

the *Old Stunda*—preserved them as simple rites ; the other branch—the young *Stunda*—rejected them altogether, abolishing likewise the dignity of the elder brother, or elected Presbyter. They adopted the same mode of service as we have seen among the *Molokane*.

As regards the higher theological dogmas, the *Stunda* do not seem to differ in any way from Orthodox Christians. It is not quite clear whether they push the freedom of interpretation and the spiritualisation of the Scriptures to the same point as the *Molokane* do. The sect is still in the state of being formed, and its doctrinal side is not yet definitely settled. The *Stundists* show, however, a marked tendency to simplify the speculative part of their doctrine by accepting the views of the Orthodox Christians, such as they are.

Still, the real difference between the *Molokane* and the *Stundists*—the first representing ancient, the second modern, popular Protestantism—consists in their general physiognomy rather than in any particular tenets. The *Stundists* are the Protestants of the New Testament. The *Molokane* are the Protestants of the Bible. Both sects of course accept the whole of the Scriptures, but the *Stunda* makes little use of the Old Testament.

“To the Gospels the *Stundists* look for general principles—for examples of Christian virtues, and for the whole code of individual morality. In the Epistles and Acts they see the legislative part of the New Testament, embodying the principles on which Christian communities ought to be based” (*Slovo*, 1880).

The most erudite *Stundists* read the Bible, and will make an occasional quotation from it, but they consider the New Testament as quite sufficient for the edification of a Christian. All the important points of their doctrine are based upon the New Testament, whilst the *Molokane* use the Old and the New Testaments indiscriminately. Thus, for example, the *Molokane* reject the orthodox fasts, which consist in abstinence from certain kinds of food on prescribed days and at certain seasons, whilst they admit the old Jewish method of fasting, *i.e.*, total abstinence from food and drink, leaving every Christian free to choose the time and the duration of his self-imposed mortification of the flesh. The *Stundists*, however, consider that fasts are abolished altogether, like the whole of the Jewish law. They declare the practice to be one of the many inventions of the priests, intended the better to secure their

dominion over their people. They deny that the words of Christ, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," justify the practice of fasting, but, on the contrary, interpret it in just the opposite sense: "Since the flesh is weak," they say, "it must not be further weakened by insufficient nourishment." In controversies with the orthodox, they are fond of likening the body to an ox, and the soul to its driver, and they ask triumphantly: "When is your ox likely to work the best—when it is kept in good condition or when it is under-fed?"

The *Molokane* are fully penetrated with the high precepts of Christian love and charity; but, with a fellow-feeling with the thrifty patriarchs of biblical times, they consider the accumulation of worldly goods, and the "multiplication of herds and of slaves," as a special sign of God's grace, and in nowise objectionable in a true Christian.

The *Stundists* do not preach community of goods, but with them the levelling tendencies of the Gospel, unalloyed by the traditions of Jewish customs and class distinctions, appear more prominent and pure and binding. All this makes them simpler, fresher, and more popular in their social conceptions.

This difference, combined with the ardour of a first explosion, which the *Molokane* spent in an earlier struggle, 'carried on in more ungrateful times, has caused the *Stunda* to spread like wild-fire, whilst the *Molokane* have moved very slowly.

The new sect has spread, indeed, rather by contagion than by active propagandism.

As soon as the neighbouring villages learned that the Osnova people had gone over to the *Stunda*, they followed their example. Congregations were formed in the villages of Rastopol, Ignatovka, etc., in the same Odessa district. The *Stunda* next appeared in the neighbouring town of Nicolaev, and in the village of Zlynka in the Elisavetgrad district—all in the same Province of Kherson.

Three years had not elapsed before the sect had spread over the provinces of Ekaterinoslav, Kharkoff, and Poltava, and then leaped over the boundaries into Tchernigov, Mogilev, and Kieff. In 1877 it appeared in St. Petersburg, and then in Moscow.

Such extraordinary rapidity in the propagation of the new creed is the most conclusive proof of the spontaneity of the movement, all the more so that neither Ratushny nor any of his early

followers showed any particular talent as propagandists. The ground was evidently well prepared beforehand.

In the literature of the *Stunda* there is one precious document, which throws much light on the spiritual conditions of the South Russian people, who form the bulk of the members of the new sect. It is *The Autobiography of a Southern Stundist*, from the pen of a former serf, who in the thirty-seventh year of his age came across the *Stunda* and immediately became one of its converts.

The account of his conversion only occupies a few of the concluding pages of his story. The bulk of it relates in a naïve, uncoincided way the history of a life of almost uninterrupted suffering. It reveals to us a delicate moral nature, eminently sensitive to right and wrong, struggling from childhood under the blows of brutal selfishness, wickedness, and cruelty. There is no bile in his heart. He does not rebel, though sometimes he disobeys; but in the innermost depths of his soul he never submits. He never overlooks injustice done to others or inflicted on himself. Against such trespasses his heart protests keenly and passionately, and when over

whelmed with pain, and disgust, and despair, there arises within it a vehement appeal to God, the Protector of the distressed.

We see before us a man with the intensely religious temperament, so common among the peasants of all branches of the Russian race, whose notions, associated with the name of religion, are, however, exceedingly limited. Of the faith to which he belonged by birth he knew only some parts of a prayer his mother had taught him. He tells us how, on one occasion, he remembered the priest had one day said in his sermon, "Pray to God and the saints in heaven." "These words came to my mind when I was taking the horses into the steppes to graze, and I said to myself, I wish I knew how to become a godly man. This thought laboured within me for a long time. How glad should I be to take counsel of somebody who is wise in such matters; would it not be well to ask father when he comes home? But no, father won't be able to explain such things to me, he himself is a great sinner. And so I went on, looking after the herd and ruminating within myself, What shall I do to become a godly man?" I pondered over the question for several months.

“ And there were three hillocks * on this steppe. One day I, with my drove of horses, reached the biggest of these hillocks, which stood in the middle. The drove began to graze, the colts in the middle, and the mares keeping watch over their little ones, as they usually do. I left them alone and climbed the hillock by myself. When I reached the top of it, I saw a cavity of such depth that when I descended into its centre I could not be seen from any part. ‘What a fool I was!’ said I to myself. ‘I have lived here for such a long time, and yet did not know that there were cavities on the tops of the hillocks.’ I kneeled down and began to pray. That is the way to become a godly man, thought I.

“I prayed there for many days. When I had climbed to the top of the hillock I felt as if I was nearer to God. But then there came over me doubts about my prayer. ‘Is it the right one?’ I asked myself. ‘Mother taught it me, so it is probably the right one.’ And I began to think that mother was better than father, because she took no drink, and worked harder than father, that she was never idle at home, and always tried

* *Mohilas* in the original,—small artificial hills, supposed to be remains from pagan times.

to earn something out of doors, wherewith to feed her children, and that father spent all his earnings in drink. Then I remembered, that people had said to me, that, if you pray to God for yourself alone, your prayer will not be heard, but that if you want to be heard you must pray for somebody else besides. And I said to myself, 'I will not pray for father, because he drinks, but I will pray for my mother and brothers.' And so I did. And I resolved to pray on each hillock in turn, one day on the first, the next on the second, the third on the last. Thus I prayed for three years, as long as father was employed on the estate of Mr. D——, and I had to take the drove of horses to the steppe." •

Later on he had another religious fit, produced by accidentally hearing an *Acatistus* * in honour of the Virgin Mary and Jesus. For five years he prayed, repeating the few disjointed sentences from these hymns, which his memory retained. He rose by night, and wept and prayed in his almost inarticulate way with such fervour and

* A hymn in honour of the Virgin Mary, used in the Greek Church, in memory of the deliverance of Constantinople from the barbarians in the seventh century, so called because those who sing it do not sit down.

intensity that at one time he feared his brain would give way.

What was he asking for in these ardent supplications? He was not clear himself. He wanted to become a godly man, which to him meant to live a pure moral life, dedicated to spiritual works, and undefiled by that which he saw around him.

He was told that at Kieff there was a monastery in which men led such a life. He ran away from his master and went thither. But what he saw and learned of the life and morals of the monks disgusted him so exceedingly that he escaped from the monastery on the third day and returned to his master, to be flogged for disobedience, rather than live in such a place.

When, at the mature age of thirty-seven, he met a *Stundist* who, after a few explanatory remarks, put into his hands a copy of the Gospel for the first time in his life, it was a revelation to him, and his conversion to the new creed was at once assured. In the society of his new friends, and in the doctrines which they taught him, he found the solution of the doubts of his life, and the fulfilment of the ideals which he had always cherished in the innermost depths of his soul. •

The "Southern *Stundist*" belongs to the rank and file. Neither by his intelligence nor by his energy of thought can he be placed above the average. He was exceptionally unfortunate in the circumstances of his life, being the son of a homeless, hunted-down, fugitive serf, and therefore exceptionally ardent in his search after a refuge and consolation. There is, however, no lack of suffering in any of the walks of Russian peasant life, and many are bolder and more active in the search after truth than was the "Southern *Stundist*."

• There were several trials of the early *Stundists*, at which the accused made a candid deposition as to their creed and the causes of their conversion. The only new factor in the accounts of these wholesale conversions, which is pointed out with greater clearness by all these declarations, is the incapacity of the clergy of the orthodox Church to satisfy the spiritual needs of the people, whilst in our story the clergy are merely conspicuous by the absence of any trace of their existence. For the rest, all of the sectarians who pass before us are shown to have been moved to join these sects by the same inner discontent and unrest at the sight of the wrongdoings which surround them.

With most of them conversion was effected in the same simple and easy way as with the "Southern *Stundist*," that is, by the reading or hearing of the Gospel, with little, if any, additional effort on the part of the propagandist.

The founder of the *Stunda*, Michael Ratushny, on his second trial explained, with modesty and unmistakable good faith, how wrong were those who accused him of having propagated the *Stunda* all over the Province of Kherson.

"I had not the time to do it," he said, "but when the police came from the town to arrest me, and assembled the people, the priest came also, and when the people talked to him on scriptural matters he could prove nothing from the Scriptures, and then it was that the people began to doubt whether he was well versed in the Scriptures himself. When I was cast into prison all knew that I was locked up because I had read the Gospel. They wondered exceedingly, and all who could read procured the Gospel and began to read it for themselves. . . . Now the Scriptures can enlighten everybody and show them the way to salvation. When I was locked up for the second time people wondered again, and began to search after the Gospel with greater zeal, and

to read it. That is how our doctrines have spread, and not, as some people think, through my having propagated it."

At the trial of the Riazan *Stundists* in September 1880, the *Stundist* Drosdov spoke about his spiritual experiences as follows :—

"I once stood in the church, and my soul was heavy within me, and I groaned in my heart, when suddenly a kind of unutterable exaltation came upon me. Then I went to the priest and said to him, 'Speak to me, father, and explain to me, for kindness' sake, everything according to the Scriptures.' He only abused me: 'Go away from me,' he said, 'you heretic!'"

At the first Odessa trial the *Stundist* Lopata said that nobody had urged him to embrace the *Stunda*. "I once heard a small boy read from the Gospel, and I then felt that one must forsake evil behaviour and lead a righteous life." He had many times heard the Gospel read in the church, but as the reading had not been distinct he had been able to understand nothing.

At Khotiatino, near Kieff, a peasant woman had heard a vague account from someone as to in what the doctrine of the *Stunda* consisted. She had, however, already read the Gospels, and was so

U struck by the truth of the new creed that she immediately accepted it and put it into practice. She threw all her *ikons* out of window, and began to preach that God must be worshipped in spirit and in good actions, and that men should live like brothers, and divide all they possessed amongst one another.

Thus the *Stunda* spreads, the spontaneous sympathy of the hearers doing far more than any skill on the part of the propagandists—a trait common to all popular religions.

In conclusion, we will quote the words of an orthodox clergyman, a recognised authority on the matter, who gives in the *Cherson Diocesan Messenger* the following opinion as to the mode and the causes of the rapid propagation of the *Stunda*.

“A closer study of the history of the propagation of the *Stunda* has led me to the conclusion that its foundation and strength are to be sought in the spread of popular education among the people. There are among the *Stundists* illiterate people, but the bulk of the sectarians can read. When a common orthodox peasant goes over to the *Stunda* the first thing done is to teach him to read. Then they give him a copy of the New

Testament, in which all the texts considered by them to be the most important are marked, and duly explained to the neophyte, after which he is definitely accepted as a member of their congregation. There exist illiterate *Stundists* who know whole chapters of the New Testament by heart, and all the most important of its texts, with the indication of the chapters and verses.

“Education is to a *Stundist* the chief means by which to win respect and authority in his congregation, and also the best vehicle for the propagation of the heresy. A *Stundist* well read in the Scriptures, and knowing to a nicety the doctrine of his sect, enters the house of some acquaintance may be—or not rarely that of a perfect stranger—and begins to read from the Gospel. A discussion is the natural result. The propagandist declares that he walked in darkness, but that now he has seen the light; that the orthodox faith is not the true faith taught by Christ; that the priesthood, for the sake of lucre, has invented a lot of ceremonies and rites; that instead of the workings of God, in spirit and in truth, they have introduced idolatry (*ikons* and saints), and concealed the true Gospel from the people. Then the propagandist goes on to analyse the separate dogmas of the

orthodox creed, proving their fallacy by quotations from the Scriptures, adding that they, the *Stundists*, have been much persecuted for their creed, and are persecuted still, but having once seen the light of the true creed they would rather die than return to darkness.

“The visit is repeated, and the thing invariably ends in the conversion of a part of the audience to the *Stunda*.”

The New Testament was a rare book in our villages until quite recent times. The Greek Church permits laymen to read the Scriptures, and, in principle, encourages the translation of the Bible into the native tongues. Old Slavonic, into which the Scriptures were translated when Christianity was first taught to the Balkan Slavs, is not a foreign language to Russians. It is the root of both branches of the living Russian language: of Great Russian, which is the literary and official Russian, as well as of Ukrainian, or Southern Russian.

There are, moreover, no popular dialects in our country. The fourteen millions of Ukrainians, settled in the plains of south-west Russia, all speak exactly the same language. The fifty

millions of Great Russian peasants, from the shores of the Baltic to those of the Pacific, speak, with but slight provincialisms, pure, unsophisticated Russian—the language in which Tolstoi writes his simpler stories and Lermontoff wrote the gem of his poems. To a Russian peasant Old Slavonic is no more difficult to learn than to an average educated Russian. If he were to set himself to read the Slavonic Bible, by the time he reached the middle of the book, if not sooner, he would, without the assistance of any teacher, have mastered the language completely. The *Rascolniks*, for example, find no difficulty in reading the Scriptures in the ancient version. This is not so, however, with the common orthodox peasantry.

A translation of the Scriptures into modern Russian was, therefore, very essential to them. Yet it is a fact very characteristic of our clergy that for centuries they never thought of making it. It was thanks to the untiring efforts of the three English clergymen, Paterson, Pinkerton, and Henderson, founders and promoters of the St. Petersburg branch of the London Bible Society, that the Russian version of the New Testament was published. Instituted in 1812, this branch

society only succeeded in issuing a parallel Russian and Slavonic Gospel in 1818, and a separate Russian version of the complete New Testament only in 1824, by which time it had already published one in forty-one dialects of various savage and semi-savage tribes living on the outskirts of Russia.

Two years later, in April 1826, the Russian branch of the Bible Society was suppressed by the Emperor Nicolas. The then^c Minister of Public Instruction, Admiral Shishkoff, and the Arch-Abbot, Totius, denounced the Bible Society as "a revolutionary association, intended for the overthrow of thrones and churches, of law, order, and religion throughout the world, with a view to establishing a universal republic." *

As to the Russian branch of the said society, the Minister reported that "a most careful investigation of all the actions of this body shows clearly and unmistakably that, in translating the Scriptures from the language of the Church into that of novels and of the stage, the Russian Bible Society's sole objects were to shake the foundations of religion, to spread unbelief among the

* "The Russian Bible Society," by the well-known Pypin, in the *Vestnik Evropy*, 1868, vol. vi., p. 264, *sqq.*

faithful, and to kindle civil war and foster rebellion in Russia."*

The Society was suppressed, its property confiscated, and the printed sheets of the Old Testament then in progress (reaching down to the Book of Ruth) put under lock and key. The work was not resumed until forty years later, in the second half of the next reign.

The New Testament was not, however, withdrawn from circulation, and new reprints were issued by the Synod. In the reign of Alexander II. the Bible Society was partially resuscitated, under the more modest name of "Society for the Encouragement of Moral and Religious Reading." It had its committee in St. Petersburg and its affiliated branches in the provinces, and was composed of both clergy and laymen. But this society, with all its branches, was in its turn suppressed by the Emperor Alexander III.; April 24th, 1884. The Synod and the clergy in office cannot tolerate the idea that any other than the regular village *pops*, who are under their absolute control, should interfere in what they consider their exclusive business.

The progress of popular education—for it is

Progressing unmistakably and rapidly, in the teeth of the Ministry of Public Instruction, which does everything to hinder it,—this progress has achieved more than any amount of effort from the outside could have done. The awakening of the popular intelligence has created a spontaneous demand for spiritual food. Up to the present time religion has been the chief means of satisfying this new demand, and hence the enormous popularity of the Russian version of the Gospels. The book is as eagerly sought after by the *Rascolniks* as by the orthodox. As early as 1824, when the superstitious estrangement of the *Rascolniks* from anything connected with the *Niconians* was at its height, a Moscow agent of the St. Petersburg Bible Society reported that “most of the copies of the New Testament in the Russian version (then just issued) had been purchased by the *Rascolniks*, who read this salutary book, in their native tongue, with great attention.”

It must be added, however, that the *Stundists*, who in the first ten or twelve years of their existence, at least, were almost exclusively Ukrainians, are peremptorily denied this satisfaction. They use the Great Russian version of the Gospels, the Church and the Government strictly pro-

hibiting the Ukrainian version of any part the Scriptures; and there is little chance of the revocation of this interdict, the religious question in this case being complicated by the political one.

CHAPTER II.

WHILST the *Stunda* spread from the south and south-west, northwards, another sect, which is now an entirely rationalistic one, the *Shalaput*, gained a firm footing to the south-east. It also spread towards the north, keeping chiefly to the more eastern districts.

This sect has not as yet been so well studied as the *Stunda*, though it is comparatively an old one. From what we know about it, the *Shalaput* sect appears to be somewhat clumsier and drier than its Ruthenian protagonist, but it offers the same distinctive characteristics of modern rationalistic dissent. It is a New Testament sect above all. It places the ethical and social side of Christianity in the foreground as much as the *Stunda* does, and it has put these doctrines more thoroughly and skilfully into practice than the *Stunda* has, owing partly to the greater associativeness of the Great Russians, who form its chief contingent, partly to its longer existence.

The *Shalaput* embraced religious rationalism some ten or fifteen years before the *Stunda* was founded. The circumstances of their conversion offer an additional illustration of the spontaneity and strength of rationalistic tendencies among the whole of the peasantry of modern Russia.

The *Shalaput* sect did not start as a rationalistic one. Its founder, Abbacum Kopylov, an orthodox peasant of the province of Tambov, who died in prison in 1840, is said to have wandered for many years among the various sects, in search of the true faith. Judging by the *Shalaput* doctrine as first preached by Kopylov in 1820-30, the sects which impressed him as being the nearest to heaven must have belonged to some milder variety of the popular mystics, *i.e.*, *Chlists*. The *Shalaput* maintained its mystical character during the leadership of Kopylov's son Philip, whilst it at the same time extended considerably to the Russian south-east. From the middle of the present century, however, a strong revulsion in the *Shalaput* doctrine shows itself. Three teachers, amongst them a woman named Hania, began to preach in favour of a practical, informal creed, based on the ethics of the Gospel, and strongly opposed to the former contemplative mysticism.

In one generation the reformers succeeded in forming a curious sect, which hold their exterior forms of worship and their fundamental dogmas of ethics in common, whilst presenting considerable divergencies in matters of speculative doctrine.

The main body of the *Shalaput* has gone over to genuine rationalism. It is in that capacity that they compete with the *Stunda*. But there are sections of the *Shalaput* who lean to the theosophy of the *Dukhoborzy*, or to the strange cosmical and historical generalisations of the *Nemoliaki* (Non-prayers), or to the reformed "Wanderers," or to some other rationalistic branch of the *Rascol*. In the Caucasus, the land of exile, whither all extreme sects have been huddled together, these divergencies sometimes appear within the same congregation.

"In many congregations of the Caucasian *Shalaput*," says Abramov, the historian of this sect, "the members differ widely on many religious questions. Yet the complete uniformity of their social and ethical views keeps them together as a strong organic whole."

This is not indifference towards religion. The *Shalaput* heads and the *Shalaput* speeches are as crammed with texts, and their hearts are as

strongly moved by the Gospel, as need be; only they leave points of theology to individual taste as "irrelevant," putting up with all sorts of views. The form of worship—had there been any disagreement about it—would have offered more chance of endangering their unity; but the extreme simplicity of their service, the absence of a priesthood, and the suppression of the formality of the sacraments, is acceptable, pleasing, and convenient to all alike.

The ethics of the Gospel is the part they single out and exalt as the supreme religious truth. The earnest religious zeal of the sect seems to be spent entirely in this direction. As far as we know, the *Shalaput* is the only one of all our sects in which there exist, in working order, some practical examples of Christian communism. Abramov knows of four such communistic associations in the Northern Caucasus. One of them, which he has visited consists of forty households grouped together in five groups, one at each of the five ends of a large orthodox village. Each "end" forms a kind of big family. The fences between the houses have been removed, thus throwing open to all the houses an entrance into a vast common court. Clothes and household

utensils are the only things which every family keeps to itself; all the rest is common property. The five ends together form but one communistic association as regards both production and consumption. The field work is executed in common, according to a plan previously agreed upon by all. The produce is divided into four parts: one part is distributed between the families *according to the number of eaters, i.e.,* their respective needs, independently of the amount of labour they can put at the service of the commune. Two parts of the produce are kept for seed, and for cases of emergency. The last quarter is taken to market. The money received is divided in the same communistic spirit between the five groups, according to their respective needs for the current year. One portion of it is sent to the reserve fund of the *Shalaput* of the province; another is forwarded to the central fund of the whole *Shalaput* federation, which has its seat in the Province of Tambov.

The ordinary *Shalaput* congregations, which have nothing exceptional in their economical arrangements, have all some provision for the common good, quite irrespective of ordinary beneficence. Most members regularly contribute

the "tithe" of all their earnings to the special fund intended for the relief of the needy. This is a heavy tax for a Russian *moujik*, whose resources are so limited: Yet the sacred tithe is paid, though there is no police to force it upon anybody.

Some of the *Shalaput* congregations, moreover, impose upon themselves a good deal of gratuitous work for the benefit of the destitute, which they perform in the same spirit of religious discipline. "Whoso labours, prays," is their favourite saying.

A life of labour is, according to the *Shalaput*, the surest path to salvation, and they always have a lot of texts ready to prove this. To live by the work of others is, on the other hand, considered as a particularly heavy sin. "I knew," says Abramov, "a rich peasant of the Province of Stavropol, a regular *koulak*, who held whole villages in bondage. Having married a young girl who was a leading *Shalaputka*, he turned *Shalaput* himself, and, by way of expiation for his former sins, opened his granary and his house and his purse to all who wanted to receive something from him. In half a year he became as poor a labourer as the rest."

The sect of the *Shalaputs* exists in eleven provinces of south-eastern and central Russia.

It is constantly on the increase, mostly at the expense of orthodoxy, though it is very successful with the *Rascol* likewise.

In the Province of Stavropol, and in the region of Terek, they form from 5 to 15 per cent. of the whole population.

The *Shalaputs* are united into a sort of federation. The elected Elders or "readers" of each congregation, performing the simple functions of ministers, are likewise invested with a sort of administrative authority. Once a year or so the Elders of the congregations meet in some town—generally at "fair" time,—and hold—in secret, as a matter of course—the so-called "Councils of the Fathers," to discuss and settle questions of general interest. It is said that the *Shalaputs* have a kind of postal service of their own, not trusting to the discretion of the general Post Office. Special "travellers" periodically visit all the congregations of the Provinces, and transmit all messages of any importance to their destinations. To avoid detection they sometimes use a cipher alphabet. The key to it was found out in 1875 by an orthodox *pop*, who communicated his discovery to the police. It was of such a rudimentary character as to prove it to be of their own invention.

These signs of the existence of a common organization must not be regarded as anything unusual or extraordinary. It is simply a proof that the *Shalaputs* are an old sect, which underwent a certain intellectual transformation whilst preserving its outward cohesion. All Russian sects of long standing find means of developing into a kind of loose federation. The "Wanderers" have done this. The "Priestless" and "Priestly" have done it in a better form even than that described above.

The *Stundists*, who are still in their infancy as a sect, have also taken the first steps towards the formation of a future organisation : they now and then hold local councils, and have a common fund, intended for the support of those brethren who have suffered for the creed, and also for the equipment and support of the propagandists who undertake the mission of "preaching the Gospel to the idolators," which means, the orthodox.

There is one curious thing amongst the *Shalaputs* which is worth mentioning. Some sections of this sect still hold strange views on the relations of the sexes. There are *Shalaputs* who preach the doctrine of complete abstinence : one must live, they say, with a wife as with a sister. Others

temporise in favour of comparative abstinence, at the same time admitting a certain gradation in the sinfulness of matrimonial life. The less objectionable form, in their opinion, is that which is based on strong spiritual attraction. The *Shalaput* of this persuasion chooses accordingly among the women of his congregation a "confessor,"—his wife being of course at liberty to do the same in her turn. Thus, outside the legitimate families, others—illegitimate—grow up, the legitimate ones not being dissolved. With the views held by our peasants as to property, which are fully endorsed by the sectarians, a man and wife who have worked side by side for a long time, have become joint partners in everything they have earned together. The legitimate families are therefore preserved as an economical union, but the husband maintains and rears the children of his illegitimate wife, whilst his own are maintained and reared in the family of his "confessor."

All these peculiarities are evidently the last remains of the old *Chlists* to which the *Shalaputs* formerly belonged. Driven from the domain of speculative doctrine, it has lingered longest in the common institutions of everyday life.

CHAPTER III.

BESIDES the two large rationalistic sects, a number of smaller ones of the same type are reported as being founded here and there, almost every week, showing an exuberance of religious feeling which nowadays generally finds vent within the rationalistic bodies. Here we will describe only one of them, which is interesting both on its own account and as a fair sample of the majority.

In 1876, in consequence of a denunciation by the local priest, a peasant of the Province of Novgorod, named Vasily Sutaev, was indicted before a magistrate under the charge of having refused to christen his grandson. At the interrogation Sutaev answered that he had refused to christen his grandson because it is said in the Scriptures, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," and the child could not repent his sins. The tribunal acquitted Sutaev.

The next year, 1877, the same priest lodged a

new denunciation against the man, accusing him and his handful of followers of being "socialists who recognize no authorities." This caused the sect and its founder to be for the first time brought before the public.

A well-known investigator of our nonconformist bodies, A. Prugavin, paid a visit to the social reformer of Shevelevo, and published a very interesting paper about the new sect and its founder in one of our periodicals.

Of late the name of Sutaev has acquired considerable notoriety, owing to his great intimacy with Count L. Tolstoi, the novelist, who has also recently joined the sectarians. In relating the story of his inner struggles he says that the man who helped him most to issue victoriously from out of the net of contradictions and falsehoods, and to form his present creed, was Sutaev.

Such a testimonial, from the author of *War and Peace*, makes it doubly interesting to follow the development of the religious idea in him.

Sutaev gave definite shape to his doctrine when he was about fifty years of age. His creed was the summing up of a life's experiences. Born before the Emancipation, he came of age and married at twenty, when serfdom was at an end.

The first use he made of the comparative independence of married life was to learn to read. He mastered this, to grown-up people, rather difficult art, and went to St. Petersburg to work as a stonecutter at a monumental mason's shop. After some ten or twelve years of work he succeeded in scraping a small capital together, and started in a shop of his own. His business prospered. In time he got some leisure, which he and his eldest boy, who served as shop assistant, were fond of spending in "salutary" reading. Their favourite book was, of course, the Gospel. They were very much impressed by the constant contradiction of practical life, their own included, to the teachings of the Scriptures. Their profession gave them many twinges of conscience. The son, Dmitri, was particularly sensitive about it.

"We are sinning, father," he repeated. "There is a good deal of sin in commerce. We must give it up."

The father tried to persuade him to let the matter rest for a short time, only for one year, but the young man could not stand it, and leaving the shop engaged himself as manual labourer somewhere else. Both the son and the father,

truthful to their pleasant origin, considered, commerce to be not "log work," but "usury."

A year later Sutaev closed his shop as he had promised. The 500 roubles, which represented all he had made in commerce, he distributed among the poor, and tore the bills he held on some one else, to pieces.

He returned to his village, and resumed the agricultural work in which there was no sin, but sin was all around him. "I saw that there was no love amongst the people. All ran after money; and I began to reason with myself as to wherefore it should be thus. Why this thing? why that? I spoke to clever people, and applied to the *pop*."

The *pop*'s explanations did not satisfy Sutaev in the least. So he began to think for himself, and gradually relinquished the rites and observances of the Orthodox Church. First he left off wearing the cross on his breast, as the orthodox are wont to do.

"I felt it was sheer hypocrisy," he explained to his friend and biographer. "We wear Christ's cross on our breasts, but in our lives we do not care about Christ, and do nothing for the sake of his truth."

A child was born in his family. People wondered why he did not christen it.

"Wherefore?", he asked. "We are all of us christened, and yet continue to live worse lives than the infidels."

He did not christen the child at all. Once, when on the occasion of a great festival the priest came to his house, Sutaev put him in the place of honour, and asked him to explain to him something about the rite of christening.

"What do you want of me, you blackguard?" said the *pop*. "Do you wish me to christen you with this stick?"

Sutaev began to argue his point, but the *pop* made short work of his arguments.

"If I had only known what you would turn out, I should have drowned you in the baptismal font!"

He called him names, and said to Sutaev that he was the devil.

When the *pop* had become a little more composed, Sutaev took up a copy of the Gospel, and pointing to one text asked him to explain it. Hereupon the *pop* lost his temper again, and snatching the book from Sutaev's hands threw it under the table.

After this scene Sutaev abstained from going to church altogether.

Several of the members of the future sect had had somewhat similar experiences with their spiritual fathers.

A relative of Sutaev's, a certain Elias Ivanov, who had at one time kept a retail shop in the village, but who gave up commerce "for the sake of his soul," explained why he had ceased to go to confession as follows: One year he had not taken the Sacrament for want of time. The *pop*, on meeting him, upbraided him vehemently for this negligence, but then agreed to put down his name in the confession register for the sum of twenty kopecks (fivepence).

"Well, father," asked the peasant, "have I now received absolution for my sins? Does my soul run no further risk of being roasted in hell?" The *pop* took offence.

"Hold your tongue," he said, threatening with his finger. "I know to whom to apply to silence you."

A third, a retired soldier, Lunev, deposed before a magistrate that nobody had tried to convert him, but that when the *pop* had refused to christen his baby for less than a certain sum,

he had christened the child himself, and when after a time it died, he buried himself, without applying to the *pop*. He had not gone to church since, because, he said, "it was not a house of prayer, but a house of plunder."

The final secession from the church was accomplished naturally and gradually. One day Sutaev and his followers dropped the fasts, on the authority of the well-known text:—"Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." Another day they collected all their *ikons*, and carried them in a bundle to the house of the priest, bidding him take care of these idols, for they did not want them. A couple had to be married: Sutaev opened the Gospel, read the chapter on the miracle in Cana of Galilee, delivered a short allocution, and pronounced the benediction over the young couple.

On Sundays instead of going to church they met at Sutaev's house to read the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, of which they were particularly fond. The dissenting Church was definitely constituted, and spread among the Shevelevo peasants, extending thence among the surrounding villages.

Inspired by a feeling of moral rebellion against the iniquity and injustice prevailing among men, the new creed aims above all at improving the mutual relations of humanity.

"What do you say about my sect?" Sutaev said. "We have no sect whatever. All we want is to be true Christians, and true Christianity is Love. We believe in the Trinity, but God the Father is Love; Jesus Christ taught the principles of love, and the Holy Ghost, through the Apostles, taught us the same. Our doctrine is that there ought to be no plunder, no killing, no fighting, no usury, no commerce, no money. Of what use is money, if we all live as brothers, and each can have all he needs from the others?"

Sutaev and his followers tried to give practical application to these principles. Their attempts were often unsuccessful, but always generous and sympathetic. Sutaev greatly objected, for instance, to the universal suspicion which prevailed, and to the many precautions people take against one another, just as if all were criminals.

One evening the following scene took place in the street at Shevelevo.

"Nicolai Ivanovitch," said Sutaev to one of his fellow-villagers, "are you a thief?"

"No, thank God!"

He put the same question all around, and, having received the same answer from all, said in his turn,—

"Neither am I a thief. Why then do we take everything up as if we were thieves all round?"

He declared that as to him, if he "should take all the locks from off his house and stores."

Robberies began. He did not mind. One night some peasants of a neighbouring village came with a car to rob his storehouse. They had already filled the car, and were preparing to depart, when Sutaev, awakened by the unusual noise, appeared before them. They felt much alarmed, but Sutaev entered into the storehouse, took the single remaining sack of grain on his shoulders, and threw it on to the car.

"If you are in need of bread, take this also."

The thieves departed. But the next day they returned ashamed, bringing back their booty.

"We have changed our minds," they said.

It was not easy, however, to confound all the thieves of the neighbourhood, the vagabonds particularly. Sutaev held out for a long time, but finished by putting on the locks again.

"When all have accepted the community of goods," he said, "there will be no thieves."

The Shevelo congregation made an unsuccessful attempt at practical communism. They agreed to follow the example of the early Christians, and to possess everything in common. All went well for some time; but the old Adam broke out again in a certain soldier, Lunev, a former *koulak* and usurer, who had abandoned his practice under the influence of the new creed. Now, Lunev was accused of having retained, for his private benefit, a part of the crops he had to deposit in the common granary. People began to quarrel; therefore, to avoid further scandal, the congregation reverted to the ordinary system of property. They, however, still practise mutual assistance to a great extent, preferring exchange of work to any form of pecuniary help.

The dogmatic side of Sutaev's doctrine is exceedingly plain. The only part clearly developed is the negative. No *ikons*, no saints, no relics, no fasting, no priesthood, no Sacraments. They have a sort of christening ceremony, which they perform themselves; but it is not clear whether they consider it in the light of a sacrament or not. Probably not. The marriage ceremony is per-

formed by the father of the bride, and merely consists in the reading of some appropriate chapters from the Scriptures. Their views on the higher theological dogmas, such as the Trinity, the Redemption, the Immortality of the soul, are not clearly determined.

"Paradise must be made here on earth. What will be found there" (pointing to the skies) "I do not know. I have not seen the other world. This question is a hidden one."

The points on which they are precise, resolute, sometimes passionate up to the point of martyrdom, are those concerning human ethics. One of Sutaev's sons (John), when the question of military service, the rock on which all spiritual Christians split, came before him, refused point blank, not only to take the oath, but even to touch the soldiers' guns or to put on the sword. "It smells of blood," he said. "Christians should fight with spiritual swords only." After several attempts to break through his obstinacy he was locked up in Schusselbourg.

Sutaev's views as to civil authorities are those common to all spiritual Christians: the good ones must be obeyed, the evil ones resisted, though passive resistance only is permissible.

The spirit of inquiry has as yet hardly touched upon general political questions, but even so early as 1882, which is the date of Mr. Prugavin's publication, the payment of taxes devoted to purposes of violence and war excited in Sutaev some scruples. In 1880 he refused to pay his share of the taxes unless the official who superintended that department would first explain to him on what the money would be spent. The official naturally laughed in his face, and took out a summons against him. Part of his property was sold and the taxes deducted. The next year the story was repeated.

Whether Sutaev has continued this practice up to the present time or not we do not know.

It is easy to recognise, in most of Sutaev's views on matters religious and social, the doctrine now preached by his famous disciple of Yasnaia Poljana. Count Tolstoi's doctrine of passive resistance, his views on the questions of taxation, military service, tribunals, money, mutual assistance by direct exchange of labour, as well as the great stress he lays on ethical questions—all are identical with the doctrines of Sutaev. Since Count Tolstoi rejects the dogmas of future life and the immortality of the soul, as well as the divinity of

Jesus Christ, it may be permissible to infer that his friend has also moved in the same direction.

Possibly he was not far from these conclusions when Bugavin gave his account of Sutaev's views. A certain reticence on such delicate points as these is indispensable to a Russian writer.

The so-called *Sutaeuzy*, or followers of Sutaev, are constantly gaining ground in many villages in the Province of Novgorod and those surrounding it.

It is doubtful, nevertheless, whether such a sect can ever become a really popular one. As a man of exceptional intellectual power and boldness of thought, Sutaev has gone farther than most of the modern sectarians. His creed has too much of the secular element in it for it to be accepted by very many. But the general tendencies of his doctrine, as well as the spiritual and moral experiences which led him to found his sect, are eminently typical. There are in every village and hamlet, perhaps in every household, of rural Russia, men and women in exactly the same mood as Sutaev, and who are ready to follow in the same path.

CHAPTER IV.

WE should greatly benefit by giving a longer list of modern sects. The examples cited show clearly the causes, the character, and the extent of the religious movement in Russia, which is now spreading all over the orthodox and the *Rascol* world. Its striking uniformity, spontaneity, and contagiousness clearly indicate in it an incipient general movement on the part of the masses. Being, as far as mere doctrine goes, very similar to the *Molokane*, the new sectarianism, as a factor of social life, corresponds with the *Rascol* of the seventeenth century. Like the *Rascol*, it is the outcome of the combined influence of social and political discontent, built upon the freshly-awakened religious feelings of the people.

Two centuries of national life have, so far developed our people, intellectually as to modify both the character of the modern creeds and the method pursued in order to awaken popular interest in them.

The *Rascolniks* of the seventeenth century, the fetish-like devotion to forms and rites notwithstanding, were as truly religious and Christian as the *Stundists* of to-day, or any of the Western sects. They were fully penetrated by the spell of the personality of Christ, affected under the direct influence of this feeling. What their Christ required them to do makes no psychological difference; this was merely a reflection of the low intellectual level of the people of that epoch, which evidence is further corroborated by the fact that at that period the chief thing which roused the people from their apathy was the personal example of martyrdom, as has been clearly proved in those chapters which refer to the *Rascol*. They were like young children, who can only understand and feel strongly and vividly those things which are presented to them in a palpable form, calculated to strike their senses.

They now no longer need material demonstration in the domain of religion, at all events. Persecution plays a perfectly immaterial part in the rapid spread of modern sectarianism. Only at the beginning did the Government try to apply the usual methods of criminal courts and deportation without judgment, against the new sectarian-

ism. After a short experience these methods have been prudently abandoned, and the sectarians have been left almost unmolested. The only means resorted to to awaken the religious spirit nowadays, as we have plainly seen, is the simple reading of the Gospel; and what they read in its words now, is very different from what their forefathers understood in times of yore. The masses, or, to be exact, the leading section of the masses, has taken, in the last two centuries, a step forward. It stands now upon the same level where, one century ago, stood a small minority, which furnished the contingent of our old rationalistic sects—the *Molokane* and the *Dukhoborzy*.

• And the minorities?

The minorities have nowadays stepped out of the tutelage of religion altogether, and are fully able to participate in the stream of positive scientific European thought. The flower of our working men turn socialists, read John Stuart Mill, Spencer, and Darwin, Koštomarov and Sečhenov, Turghenev and Ostrovsky, just as the young people of the privileged classes do. It is immaterial whether they turn freethinkers or not, though for the most part they do. All that is essential is, that they have dispensed with the crutches of religion.

They are one with the whole of educated Europeanized Russia, upon which the future destinies, as well as the present salvation, of the country certainly depend. For it is here that are conveyed in various forms and stored up the knowledge, the understanding, and the creative ideas evolved by the dull works of various denominations, which in the latter resort rule the world.

To describe this Europeanized Russia does not come within the limits of this study. But it is fully within our scope to enquire, What are the mutual relations of these two cultures—the strongly positive one, which radiates from the towns; and the strongly religious one, harboured in the villages?

We need not enter upon generalities. It is certainly a fact that religion, whilst stimulating thought, at the same time hampers it by tracing for it certain impassable barriers. All, however, who come into direct contact with the new sects, or have studied them with attention, concur in the opinion that to our peasants religion has given much more than it has withheld. The rationalistic sectarians, as a body, represent the most intellectual elements of our rural population.

They know how to read almost to a man, and what is more, they do read, not the Scriptures only, but very many other books and papers which are within their reach. They are open to all the influences of modern civilisation and literature, which is still, a letter to a large mass of the orthodox peasantry. Thus our rural culture is by no means hostile to the culture of the towns; it marches forward on the same road and to the same goal, following the latter at a certain distance.

Some of the exponents of sectarianism—Pruvagin and Abramov amongst them—expect that our sects will take the lead. They see in them popular attempts to discover and work out new and higher forms of social life—almost experiments of practical socialism. We do not exactly share this too flattering opinion. The practical attempts of Christian socialism, such as that of Popoff and others, were so small and shortlived, and as a rule so wanting in originality, that they cannot be considered as a new departure. The real sphere of sectarianism, in which it has succeeded wonderfully, is not creation, but conservation. The social ideals which the rationalistic sects profess and maintain were our *mirs'* ideals, pure and simple, no whit higher nor better, though

more fully applied, protected as they are by the impregnable walls of religion. Sectarism is for our people a means of defending what they hold dear, and not of developing anything new.

This function performed by the sects in our social dynamics is a very important one, and the service rendered by the sects to the people is very great. They will help to preserve and transmit to a future generation the inheritance of habits and moral ideas which are of great social value in themselves, and yet more so as the materials and starting-point of future development.

Yet even in this more modest, though very valuable office, the influence of modern sectarism can hardly be counted upon as likely to endure for a very long period of time. The *Rascolniks* who stood their ground for two hundred years had a much easier task to perform. They rebelled against the iniquities of the political order: the institution of serfdom, the poll-tax, conscription, centralization of the Church, and administrative abuses. They possessed a territory of their own, and their enemies were outside of it. The modern sectarists who have rebelled against the *koulaks*, *mir*-eaters, usurers—"the new Pharaohs who enslaved the people," to use the *Stundists'* phrase, have to fight a more

dangerous enemy within their own precincts. It is doubtful whether they will be able to hold their own beyond a certain very limited extent. Religion cannot stand for long against the battering-rams of economical influences. It never did, though it has often tried, and there is no reason to suppose that our sectarians will form an exception to this rule. They will hold their own as long as they are isolated and few, and religious enthusiasm has not cooled down to its natural point. When this is over, the economical decomposition must needs penetrate into the sectarian *minds* as it has penetrated into the orthodox ones. However opportune the assistance our people receive at this critical moment from religion, it is only a temporary one,—a glass of strong wine, which reinvigorates an exhausted traveller for a time, but will not prevent his falling on the road at last, if in the meantime he does not receive more substantial nourishment; unless indeed there comes a moment when from a purely defensive weapon this religion changes into an aggressive one, stimulating the people to open rebellion, in one form or another, against the kingdom of Baal.

The rationalistic sects, though so very peaceful

now, are in reality more dangerous to the existing order of things than the old *Rascol* was. They have touched the root of the evil by traducing the existing institutions before the tribunals of reason and conscience. They are consistent and thorough, and they do not, from superstition, shun the orthodox masses. The negation of the authority of the Government, whether absolute, as with the *Dukhoborzy*, or conditional, as with all the rest of the rationalists, has up to the present time only led them to individual acts of passive resistance. It may become a collective one in time; it may change its nature altogether. Religion can express everything, assume any shape. The spirit of active rebellion is unmistakably growing among the peasantry outside the realms of sectarianism. Why should it not invade the sects also when their power to satisfy the actual desires of the people shall be exhausted? At all events, it is impossible to depend much upon the loyalty of a well-organised body of perhaps three or four millions of people who, for aught we know, may become ten or twelve in a few years, and who all view the existing government as admittedly wrongful. The religious question in Russia is to some extent a riddle.

***THE TRAGEDY OF RUSSIAN HISTORY—
CONCLUSION.***

CLUSION.

IN throwing a retrospective glance over all that has been said upon the economical, social, and intellectual life of our peasantry, we shall everywhere perceive the existence of a deeply-rooted dualism. Two hostile principles are in a death-struggle in all the spheres of popular life—the one springing from the inner consciousness of the masses, the other forced upon them from the outside by those in power. •

This antagonism is not a peculiarity of modern times. The few glimpses into our past history which the *Rascol* offers us, prove that this antagonism was keenly resented by the people at least two centuries before the present era. As a matter of fact, it goes back to much earlier times. An underhand struggle between the people and the Government has been going on almost ever since the establishment of autocracy in Russia,—in other words, for four or five centuries.

The fact that the people did not re-mould the

State so as to make it fit in with their tastes is in itself a conclusive proof that there must have been some fatal shortcoming in the people themselves. Remarkably flexible in the combination of labour, and rich in resources in the higher domain of thought, the Russian popular mind seems to have been stricken by the curse of utter sterility in the domain of politics. They were never able to rise above the most rudimentary and strictly patriarchal conceptions of State and statecraft.

Perhaps this was due to the overwhelming predominance of the agricultural classes, constitutionally patriarchal; perhaps the result of the great facility offered to interior emigration, which was the easy and common wind-up to all our civil discontents, whilst in other countries people, *volens nolens*, had to stay and fight out their grievances, finding by means of friction some mutual compromise. Perhaps we should attribute it to the absence on our soil of anything which could suggest to our people some new political form, such as the rich inheritance of Roman civilisation suggested to the West. Whatever the reason, the fact is that through all the centuries of ancient political self-government, anterior to

the creation of the Muscovite Monarchy, Russia remained at the same embryonic stage of polity from which she started.

The vast popular republics which existed up to the end of the fifteenth century were established in the form of families. The metropolis stood in the position of father to the whole land, and the metropolitan crowd, when assembled in the public square, ruled over the whole of it, advancing the same claims to unlimited confidence and obedience as characterize all forms of paternal despotism. The centralized monarchy had no difficulty in overcoming these communities, which had made no provision to secure inner cohesion and unity of action. The main body of the rural population, and even the lower orders of the townspeople, accustomed to obey the patriarchal despotism of an assembly, had no difficulty in transferring their allegiance to the patriarchal despotism of one Prince.

The Muscovite rule disgusted the people wherever it was introduced; the Moscow bureaucracy, which was the real form under which monarchy came into contact with the people, proved worse than anything they had ever experienced before. But the people never regarded the shortcomings

of his agents as a reproach to the Tzar. The worse the officials, and the more impossible the access to the Tzar, the stronger grew the people's conviction that he would redress their wrongs did he only know of them. The perennial influence of hero-worship, combined with the patriarchism prevailing in the everyday life of the multitude, strengthened the legend of the Tzar-Tribune and champion of the people. The faith in him grew upon the masses in proportion as the person of the Tzar was farther removed from all chance of practical usefulness to them.

This is the fatal superstition which constitutes the tragedy of our history.

In its palmiest days autocracy represented the interests of the State and not those of the people. The well-being and the rights of the people were matters of secondary importance, when the power, the glory, the expansion of the State were at stake.

Now, the force of the State, offensive and defensive, being in the last resort represented by the force of the organized minority, the Tzar's enormous power naturally grew to be an instrument wherewith to squeeze from the toiling masses the utmost they could be made to yield for the benefit

of these organized privileged minorities. No other form of government could have gone to the same length in imposing upon the labouring classes obligatory sacrifices for the sake of the State.

Up to a certain point this was done in the interests of the people themselves, who needed to have their nationality and soil protected just as much as the rest of the community; but it was so difficult to keep within the limits of the strictly necessary, and it was so easy to overshoot the mark. It is doubtful whether there has been one single Tzar who has hesitated before imposing an additional burden on the people, or in withdrawing another privilege, in order to increase the military or the administrative power of the State, no matter whether it were needed or superfluous; and, with the single exception of Peter the Great, there has been neither Tzar nor Tzarina who, in assessing these burdens, has not shown a criminal partiality for the upper classes which have formed their immediate surroundings.

Thus, instead of maintaining popular rights, as they were expected to do, the Tzars went on gradually curtailing them in favour of the privileged classes and of the bureaucracy. The process was

very slow at first. Centuries after all traces of self-government had been destroyed in the big towns,—seats of the sovereign *vetches*—the rural population preserved many of their ancient political privileges. The regional assembly of the people elected high officials, and could summon before them, and judge, even the landowners and noblemen resident in their respective districts. Up to the beginning of the sixteenth century these assemblies in some places even preserved the name of *vetches*.

In like manner the distribution of the best arable and cultivated land to the Tzar's militiamen and courtiers did not much offend the peasants, so long as their personal freedom was not interfered with, and they could make arrangements with the new landlords as regarded rent, or remove elsewhere if they chose.

The people began to fight, and to fight desperately, when at the end of the sixteenth century the Tzars deprived them of their right of removal, thus laying their hands upon their individual freedom, and gradually putting on their necks the yoke of serfdom.

For two centuries the terrible struggle lasted, but by this time the legend of the Tzardom had

obtained such a hold upon the people's minds that their cause was doomed beforehand. The peasants withstood an evil whilst worshipping and upholding its cause. They rebelled against the unbearable tyranny of their masters and of the officials; but their hearts and their hands dropped when they met an abemmitative spokesman of the Tzar. They were in the position of the pugilist who should have fought with a slip-knot round his neck, which would throttle him at any bold move.

They took heart and fought their great battles only when they had at their head some Imperial phantom—a false Demetrius, or a second Demetrius of Tushino, who was the *false* false Demetrius; or the Russian Spartacus, the Cossack Emelian Ivanovitch Pugatchev, who under the name of Peter III. stirred to open rebellion one half of enslaved Russia, and made Catherine II. tremble upon her throne,—an unique spectacle among popular risings, made in the name of truth and justice, and at the same time backed by an impudent lie, which was an open secret to very many of its champions; which strove to attain to the progressive ideals of freedom, equality, and social justice, and was at the same time a downright reaction. If successful it would have merely thrown Russia back from

the eighteenth into the fifteenth century, with the prospect of a gradual re-bestowal, of the privileges taken from Catherine's nobility in favour of Pugatchev's Cossacks and generals and their descendants.

After the bloody suppression of Pugatchev's rising, no further popular insurrection of any moment ever took place. For the century the people bore the frightful chains of slavery, which the Tzars supported merely to please the idle nobility; for, since the day when the nobility—at one time militiamen—had been exempted from obligatory service to the State (1762), serfdom had become an inexcusable act of tyranny, and its support by the Tzars an act of treachery.

Did such a flagrant, palpable treason to the popular cause throw a damper upon the popular belief in the Tzars? No, it did not. The people seemed to be more than ever devoted to them. It is astonishing how feeble both logic and reason are when they have to cope with imagination and certain other vague aspirations of the human heart.

The patriarchism of our people once again played us a trick. The self-governing patriarchal institutions, entirely driven from the upper walks of life, and completely forgotten by the people, nestled

within the village communes, their last refuge and stronghold. Here they exhibited a marvellous tenacity and adaptability. As long as the economical equality between the members of the *mir* was not entirely broken down, the small village communes could realize the ideal of a patriarchal government more truly than the popular republics, based on the same principles, could. The *mir* is not an ideal human institution, destined to break the teeth of time. It is only a phase of development, which will certainly have to begin by first suppressing, or at all events restricting, its political functions. Of all forms of authority the patriarchal one is certainly the most insupportable to a thoroughly independent mind, just as paternal tutelage is to a full-grown man. Yet this is no argument against the usefulness of a good family education.

The *mir's* life and the *mir's* authority must be looked upon somewhat in the same light. They were an excellent school, which developed many precious qualities in the bulk of our people which will not soon disappear. But it is to this same institution that we owe the enormous tenacity of that plague of Russia, the superstition of the Tzar.

For all primitive minds the monarchical idea has a kind of peculiar fascination. The balance of powers, the mutual checks and the control of the various springs of a complicated political machinery, are pure Hebrew to them; whilst they can grasp the idea of a good and benevolent man, without an effort. It is difficult for them not to take the empty official phraseology as to their Sovereign's love, and solicitude for their good, literally. Of human temptations and weaknesses they know only those sordid ones which they see in their own everyday life. A man who is placed so much above them is naturally fancied by them to be above human nature altogether. In the continental monarchies there has always been, and there still lingers, much of this superstition within the rural classes, notwithstanding all their constitutions. This is why in Russia monarchical superstitions have penetrated even into those regions where they would seem to have no historical reason for existence,—for instance, in the Ruthenian provinces annexed to Russia in the seventeenth century, and enslaved by Catherine II. at the end of the eighteenth.

We have not come across any positive statement on the subject with regard to the English

peasantry, but we were struck by an amusing scene in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the encounter between Mr. Brock and his tenant Dagley (p. 293, ed. of 1874), upon the "Rin-form" the king will send upon the landlord's back. It is too lifelike to be invented, and it seems to indicate that even in England there exists something of the kind, or did exist at all events at that time, notwithstanding her three centuries of constitutional government.

As for our *monjiks*, who in their *mir* had before them a tangible embodiment of this patriarchal idea of government, they performed a curious psychological operation. They mentally transferred to the Tzar the whole of the functions performed by the *mir*, thus giving to his authority a remarkably precise and clear definition. The Tzar's authority is the *mir's* authority, magnified so as to suit the requirements of the State, without being in the smallest degree changed in its most characteristic attributes. The Tzar is the common Father of the country, its Protector, and the supreme dispenser of impartial justice to all, defending the weaker members of the community from the stronger. The Tzar "pities" everybody like the *mir*. The whole of the nation's riches

‘belong to the Tzar’ exactly in the same sense as the land and meadows and forests within the boundaries of the commune belong to the *mir*. The most important function the peasant’s imagination imposes on the Tzar is that of *universal leveller*,—not, however, of movable property. The Tzar, like the *mir*, has the right to impose taxes on whomsoever he chooses, and on whatever he chooses, but he is expected not to interfere with what the people regard as the private property of each household, *i.e.*, movable capital. On the contrary, the Tzar is in duty bound to step in and to equitably redistribute the natural riches of the country, especially the land, whenever this is needed in the common interest.

All these restrictions and obligations are purely moral. The people repose implicit confidence in the Tzar’s wisdom and justice. He is absolute master of the life and property of every man within his dominions, and no exception may be taken to his orders. The occasional blunders made by the Tzar, however heavy they may be, must be borne with patience, as they can be only temporary; the Tzar will redress the evil as soon as he is better informed on the matter.

Nobody would accuse us, I suppose, of unfair-

ness in defining the popular legend of the autocracy, though we are not really sure to what extent it represents the past, and how far the present views of our peasantry as a body. Since the Emancipation many new influences have been at work in an opposite direction, in addition to which it must also be remembered that the two pillars of our patriarchism—the *mir* and the family—have changed vastly during the last twenty years, the *mir* for the worse, the family for the better.

Before the Emancipation, and for from ten to fifteen years afterwards, these institutions were in their full vigour, and so was the superstitious belief in the monarchy. It seemed to be something immutable, and so frightfully earnest that it overwhelmed and crushed the hopes of many noble Russian hearts. Thus a melody, which we dismiss as flat and commonplace when sung by a single voice, becomes strikingly solemn and impressive when taken up by an enormous crowd. During the three reigns which preceded the present one, to oppose autocracy seemed an act of madness. Yet all the thinking men of the day, in whom pusillanimity did not obscure judgment, could see that the Tzars were less capable than ever of playing the part of people's Tribunes.

A century ago, many years before any opposition was dreamt of in Russia, namely, after the outbreak of the French Revolution, autocracy lost the most essential element of a patriarchal Government, *i.e.*, full confidence in its own immutability. Abject fear took possession of the hearts of the autocrats—fear of the surging Democracy that they were expected to champion. The Tzars were no longer sure of their position, or even of their personal security, and they wanted to protect themselves by making common cause with the privileged classes. They ceased to be the representatives of the State as a whole, with no vested interests in any particular party. Prior to the Emancipation the Tzars were pleased to parade their title of “first nobleman (dvorianin) of Russia”; but after the Emancipation they might well have assumed the name of “first broker of the Empire.”

The sentimental, liberal Alexander I., and the tory-democrat Nicolas I., both so intensely worshipped by the poor *moujiks*, kept them enslaved because they feared a revolution. The Emperor Alexander II. had the courage to break the spell and to cancel this terrible injustice, but he wanted to remain an autocrat at all costs, and only grew

the more obstinate the more the new needs pressed upon him. He was inevitably driven to the fatal course of re-establishing with his left hand, abuses which he had overthrown with his right. Instead of inaugurating a new and brilliant era of progress for the nation, and securing a happy reign for himself, he merely introduced the last phase in the terrible struggle between the people and their Government.

The enemy is now at their door. If our people at the present crisis lose the battle, they will never again have anything of their own to lose. With a nation of hereditary husbandmen, the land question is the question of life and death. It is silly and cruel to consider the problem as in any way solved by the inquiry as to whether the peasants themselves would or would not prefer a return to their former state of serfdom. Certainly they would not; but they would prefer yet more, to be free without the danger of starvation.

They received the announcement of their liberation with transports of joy, but they were utterly disappointed by the details of the new agrarian regulations. Their secular superstition gave rise to some very curious phenomena of social psychology.

To begin with, they declined to believe in the authenticity of the Emancipation Act. To their candid, unsophisticated minds it seemed utterly incredible that their Tzar should have "wronged" them so bitterly as to the land. They obstinately repeated that their "freedom," *i.e.*, the Emancipation Act, had been tampered with by the nobility, who had concealed the Tzar's real "freedom," which had been quite a different thing. The most emphatic declarations made before the peasants' deputies and elders by the Emperor's ministers and by the Emperor in person could not disabuse them. They persisted in believing against belief. There were hundreds of peasants' rebellions in all parts of the empire, owing to this misunderstanding, especially during the first years which followed the Act of Emancipation. They subsided at last. After ten years of incessant persuasion through the medium of speeches, *ukazes*, floggings, and an occasional shooting, this superstition began to give way. It did not disappear, however,—it only changed its shape.

Since 1870 or thereabouts we hear no more of the peasants' doubts as to the authenticity of the agrarian arrangements of 1861. They have ended by admitting that it was really the work of the

Tzar's own hands, but the whole of our peasantry have made up their minds, and expect a *new* agrarian arrangement from the Tzar, which will rectify the blunders of the old regulations. Rumours as to the coming agrarian *ravnenie* or "redistribution," which is to take place next spring, next summer, and so forth, now and then spread like wildfire over whole provinces and regions. It is not uncommon for them to give rise to "disorderly" and illegal conduct, such as refusal to pay the rent due to the landlords, or the arbitrary appropriation of his fields by the peasants. The authorities of course intervene, and the central Government, which ascribes all things to the Nihilist propaganda, makes strenuous efforts to dissipate these dangerous rumours.

Up to the present time official and Imperial declarations have not opened the peasants' eyes. The *moujiks* see in them either a new trick of the nobles (landlords), or by some strange aberration of intellect understand the plainest statements in an exactly inverse sense to the real one. We know, for instance, cases where peasants' deputies, expressly summoned before a Governor-General to be instructed in the right views on the agrarian question, have on their return to their

villages, emphatically affirmed that "His Excellency has positively charged them to be reassured, because the Tzar will ere long effect an agrarian 'redistribution.'" They have doubtless been spoken to "about the land," and then probably the General has indulged in some vapouring about the Tzar's solicitude and benevolence. The two things when put together could for them mean nothing but "agrarian redistribution."

In 1878-79, after the enormous strain of the Turkish war, rumours relating to this supposed coming agrarian "redistribution" assumed particular definiteness and enlargement. They penetrated everywhere, and even into the ranks of the army; people openly discussed the coming rearrangements at the village meetings, in the presence of the rural authorities, who, as peasants, fully shared in the common expectations.

General Makov, then Minister of the Interior, issued a circular letter, to be publicly read in all villages, and affixed to the walls in all communal houses. This circular contradicted these rumours, and declared positively that there would be no "redistribution," and that the landlords would retain their own property. It produced no effect. Professor Engelhardt, who wrote one of his Letters

from a Village at the time of this fit of popular hopefulness, says that the *moujiks* who heard Makov's circular understood it in the following sense :—" It is requested that people shall, for a time, abstain from gossiping at random about the 'redistribution.' " * As to the ministerial warnings against the evil-intentioned disseminators of false reports, and the orders to apprehend them, they produced the most amusing bewilderment. The superior and the inferior agents of the administration could not understand each other's language. The superior officers, the gentlemen, as Engelhardt calls them, by "evil-intentioned people" meant to imply the Nihilists, the advocates and partisans of agrarian "redistribution;" whilst according to the Elders and other village authorities the "evil-intentioned" were those who opposed this movement.

..The year 1880, which was almost a year of famine, gave new zest to the popular expectations. "There is no bread in the country," they said, "the *moujiks* are so pressed that they cannot

* When three years afterwards, in March 1884, General Makov, compromised by some bribery business, committed suicide, the peasants said that he had destroyed himself because he had issued this famous circular without the Tzar's consent, and that the Tzar had just discovered his treachery.

move on their little patches of land, and the landlords have no end of land lying waste." A universal conviction grew up among the peasants that in the course of the next spring (1881) the Tzar's surveyor would come and start upon the work of general readjustment.

It must be borne in mind that, with our peasants, this idea of the coming "redistribution" never assumed the character of expropriation of one class of men—the landlords—for the benefit of another class of men—the peasants. They expected a general readjustment, a fair redivision, in the exact sense of the word. All who dwelt on the land, the landlords included, would receive their fair share of the land, according to the number of their children. Several facts relating to this period show unmistakably that such was the peasants' idea as to the "redistribution." In some places small landlords, after being asked how many children they had, received the tranquillising assurance from the peasants that "they had nothing to fear, because at the coming redistribution they would receive an extra piece of land in addition to that they already held." In other districts the impatient peasants have been discovered in the fields in the act of performing some

strange geodetic operations. On being asked what it all meant, they answered that they were "cutting off their landlord's share beforehand."

Thus, to use the authoritative words of Prof. Engelhardt, "The thing (the redistribution) about which so much has been said is understood by the *moujiks* in the following sense. At certain periods, namely, at the time of taking the census, there must be a general redivision of land all over Russia, as there are now and then local redivisions of land within the boundaries of each commune. The communal re-division means the equalization of the shares of land held by the various households. The general redistribution is to be the equalisation of the shares of land held by the different Communes. It is not a question of the expropriation of the landlords, but of the fair distribution of the land of the whole country, whether held by landlords or by peasants. The rich peasants who had estates of their own, purchased 'in perpetuity' (private property), spoke of the coming redistribution in exactly the same sense as the poorer peasants did. They never doubted but that these legally acquired estates could be taken from their legal owners and given to other people." (P. 511.)

In the eyes of genuine *moujiks* these speculations in land are similar to mutual sale or exchange, or pawning, of their respective lots of land between the members of a village commune. They are private arrangements made at the personal risk and peril of the contracting parties. When the land division comes, the *mir* takes no notice of any such agreements, which are as a matter of course only binding up to the time of the redivision.

Every *moujik*, whether rich or poor, proletarian or landowner, *mir's* man or even *mir*-eater, provided always that they have not broken their ties with the peasantry, hold the same views as to landed estates in general. They all therefore expect a universal redistribution of the land; those who have in the meantime succeeded in appropriating a nice piece of this most precious commodity look upon it as a sad but unavoidable necessity; the destitute and landless as an occasion for great rejoicing; whilst both wonder why the Tzar tarries so long over giving the signal for it, to do which, according to the multitude, is both his right and his duty.

Stripped of their monarchical trappings, these ideas present themselves as a very sound and

thorough economical theory of land nationalization. The most advanced advocates of the system would have nothing to teach our people as to its general principles. They have from their childhood been educated in the soundest theories of land nationalization, and exclude not only the right of private persons to monopolize land, but also prohibit its engrossment by some privileged Communes to the permanent injury of others.

The theory of land nationalization, for which an extreme faction of social reformers have to fight so hard in Europe, is with us not a subversive but a conservative doctrine. It exists with us as a fact of universal knowledge, an ancient and traditional right, which our people have never renounced and never forgotten, only they did not know, and for the most part do not even now know, how to protect it. They trust to an authority which, whatever the individual intention of its representative may be, is fatally hostile to these rights and these institutions, and has brought them to the verge of a complete subversion.

We Russians are now living in a critical, nay, almost solemn moment, when, to arrest this decay and to convert it into a rapid revival, no violent upheaval would be necessary. This moment will

not last long: imbecility is nowhere allowed to have its way free of cost, no, not even in Russia, but it certainly has not passed as yet. If the nation obtains control over the political powers within a measurable distance of time, land nationalization will be a reform as easy and peaceable as it is unavoidable; and that once an accomplished fact, there are ample grounds for expecting it will give to Russia a splendid start on the road of social progress.

It will relieve our agrarian distress enormously. The industry of our people and their passionate attachment to agriculture are a guarantee for prosperity when they shall have a sufficiency of land to apply their hands to. Freedom of intercourse, a larger share of local self-government, independence of the village communes, and a better education would, to say the least, certainly secure to our people, that amount of mutual assistance won by the members of the *Rascol* and other sects through their religious organization. There is nothing unreasonable in supposing that when protected by general and local freedom, a fair agrarian arrangement would be likely to possess considerable stability. Land nationalization will be a great thing for Russia, even if it merely takes

the form of an equitable redistribution of this source of work, as our people understand it to be.

But is it probable that a measure of such magnitude would lead to no corresponding improvements in the methods of agricultural labour? We do not mean small improvements in agricultural implements and modes of culture, things which individual peasants can do on their own plots of land; these we take to be a matter of course. Every intelligent husbandman will do this, provided he has the means. The main road to any really great improvement in the productiveness of national labour, in agriculture as well as in other walks of life, lies in the combination of individual effort, in the extension of the area under culture, and in the co-operation of the labourers.

Would our peasants be equal to the demand made upon them in this direction?

Well, judging by what they now are, in all probability they would.

There exist no people on the face of the earth, or, to keep within the boundaries of the better known, on the face of Europe, who, as a body, are so well trained for collective labour as our *moujiks* are. Whenever a group or a crowd of

them have some common economical interest to look after, or some common work to perform, they invariably form themselves into an *artel*, or kind of trades union, which is a free, purely economical *mir*, purged of the compulsory, despotic elements of political authority. It is a free union of people, who combine for the mutual advantages of co-operation in labour, or consumption, or of both. Its membership is voluntary, not imposed, and each member is free to withdraw at the close of the season, or upon the conclusion of the particular work for which the *artel* was formed, and to enter into a new *artel*. Quarrels between members, as well as offences against the *artel*, if not settled in an amicable manner have to be brought before the common tribunals. The *artel* has no legal authority over its members. Expulsion from the *artel* is the only punishment, or rather the only protection, these associations possess against those who break their rules. Yet the *artels* do very well, and in permanent work often prove to be lifelong partnerships. The fishermen of the north; the carpenters who go to work in the towns; the bricklayers and builders; the diggers and the freight-carriers,—all the hundreds of thousands of peasants who move from

the villages in search of work, either start by forming *artels*, or join some *artel* when they reach their destination. Every *artel* accepts work, makes engagements, etc., as a body, distributing or dividing the work they have to do amongst themselves. The principle followed is, that every man's pay shall be strictly proportioned to the amount of his individual labour, or, that this ideal shall be approached as nearly as the nature of the particular industry will admit of.

There is endless variety in the economical characters and the size of these *artels*, some being regular owners of industrial establishments or trading companies (a machine manufactory in Ural), whilst others are only temporary and limited associations of vast numbers of men, blown together by the four winds of heaven, such as those of bargemen or railway servants, etc., though in substance they all reproduce the leading features of the village *mir*.

The principle of co-operation is applied as frequently and as naturally to agricultural as to non-agricultural work. Of late years co-operation in agriculture has become even more varied and more extensive than ever before, partly because of the impoverishment of the people, and especially

because of the wholesale breaking down, throughout Russia, of the big patriarchal families. So long as they existed they formed compulsory co-operative associations, and were held together by family despotism. Now they are supplanted by free associations or self-electing *artels*.

Thus we know that in Southern Russia and in the south-west, as well as among the Kuban and Terek Cossacks, the great diminution in the number of cattle gave rise to co-operative ploughing. Several households join their cattle to form the team of four to six horses or oxen necessary to move the heavy plough used in the black earth region. Sometimes they do the harrowing in common, likewise. It is a suggestive fact that those districts where the families have been most broken up are just those where this form of co-operation is most in vogue. In the Borzensk district 90 per cent. of the householders plough their land in this manner.

In the impoverished districts of the Province of Moscow, the peasants who have no cattle at all, unite in the purchase of horses on the joint-stock principle, keeping them and using them in turn.

In the Province of Kostroma, flourishing Com-

munes invest in thrashing-machines for the common benefit, at the expense of the *mir*.

The habit of renting plots of land of neighbouring landlords, by *artels* of five, six, or more peasants for purposes of tillage, is practised everywhere. The peasants join their capitals to pay the landlord, and join their hands to till the land, and divide the profits accordingly. In many places whole *mirs* rent considerable tracts of land in the same way, tilling it by the *mir* on the principles of the *artels*. They divide such work as can be done by the job, and that which cannot be divided they do in a body. The renting of meadows by *mirs* is a universal practice, and hewing of wood is always done in a body, in the same way as all other public work. All labour of this nature is executed with an almost military precision and regularity. The working power and the obligations of each household are known to a nicety, and accounts are kept in the memories of all and of everybody, of the whole year's budget of public labour. Any given quantity of the working power of a village can be produced at a moment's notice.

The peasants are fully trained for combined work of greater dimensions,—in the draining and

large marshes, the digging of big ditches, the construction of bridges, etc., in which several villages may be concerned, or in the mowing of large meadows belonging to several, sometimes five or ten villages, in common. Every village sends its contingent of men, horses, waggons, implements, etc. They divide the work, and make the most complicated mental calculations, and keep all accounts without the use of a scrap of paper or a pencil, owing to the great development of their memories, which astonishes people accustomed to the aid of a note-book. As a rule, all these works and operations are completed without any hitch or friction. Their long training has developed in our *masjiks* two valuable qualities. These are (1) honesty in the work, which prevents a man from cheating the *artel* by supplying work of an inferior quality, when control is difficult; (2) self-command, which teaches the member of an *artel*, for the sake of the general advantage, to bear the burden with equanimity, when it so chances that he has to exert himself a little more than his neighbours.

Now, if our people are so much accustomed to co-operation in general, and co-operate so actively on a small scale, why should they be

unable to co-operate on a larger one? If they unite to make a full team for a common plough, or buy a thrashing-machine out of the general funds of the *mir*, or, as an *artel*, till a tract of land they rent, etc., etc., why should they be unable to till the whole of their communal land with improved implements on the co-operative system, which would be so immeasurably more profitable?

Why should not they in the natural course of their intellectual and economical growth pass from communal and local co-operation to general national co-operation, gradually embracing all the branches of national industry, which is nothing but socialism?

This eventuality will probably be dismissed by most of our readers as a chimera. Well, we do not think they will prove right. Taking into account the present economical ideas, the training, and the moral habits and aspirations of our rural classes, as well as the intellectual and moral dispositions of their educated brethren, there is nothing chimerical in supposing that, under the inspiring influence of Western social science, our economical evolution, when once begun, may lead to a full and comparatively rapid realisation of socialism. Or, to put it beyond

theoretical controversy, we will say that, supposing socialism is not entirely a dream, of all European nations the Russians, provided they become a free nation, have the best chance of realising it. The future will decide as to how much the Russian nation is fitted for it.

But whether altogether socialistic or only half way towards these luminous ideals of the future, Russia, to the Russians, will be something entirely different, as a factor in international life, to that ignoble and disastrous one which she now is. A nation of labourers, she is to bring to the brotherhood of nations something peculiarly her own, in the development of new forms of labour. If she cannot do this, if we are to suppose that the solution of the political crisis under which she is now struggling will come after the aspirations of labour shall have been stifled, and that Russia will have to plod on her painful way to social reorganisation in the rear of Europe, she will be but a poor imitator, and a drag upon civilisation for many generations to come.

The abstract sciences are the only things which are cosmopolitan. All that deals with, or refers to, masses of living men may be great on condition of its being national. In one domain

only has Russia attained to the glorious summit of human achievements : this is in her art ; because this was the only domain in which the genius of individual creators has been inspired and supported by the genius of the people ; with the result that it has produced a complete thing, which is as original as it is national. As it is now being rapidly incorporated as an international inheritance, it has certainly added its deep and powerful note to the general choir.

As to her polity as a nation among nations, Russia can be great otherwise than by her size, if only political freedom walks hand in hand with the growth of those ideals of labour which spring from the collective aspirations of her people. We are not European enough to successfully imitate a progress based upon the fruition of individual interest.

THE END.

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